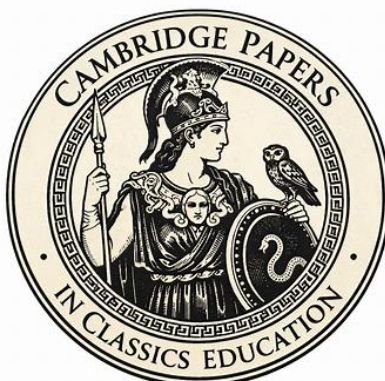


Cambridge Papers in Classics Education, Volume 1, 2026

Comprehensible Input for Ancient Languages Edition



UNIVERSITY OF
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Faculty of
Classics

Introduction

On 24th October 2025, the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge hosted a day conference on **Comprehensible Input in Ancient Languages Teaching**, bringing together educators and researchers from schools and universities across the World to discuss current developments in Latin and Ancient Greek pedagogy.

The conference was organised by Steven Hunt, Associate Teaching Professor in Classics Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. It attracted a large and diverse audience of teachers, scholars and students, with around 40 in person and over 230 online, reflecting the growing international interest in renewing methods of ancient languages instruction.

The programme examined the application of *Comprehensible Input* (CI) and related approaches in different teaching contexts, from primary education and secondary education, through to higher education and online learning environments. The aim was to bring a broad range of teachers from different contexts together, and the guest-list of educators from around the world seemed to show that it was successful.

Recordings of the individual speakers are available on the website of the conference. The papers in this volume are worked-up examples of what was said at the conference. Copyright is retained by the author.

We hope to put on another conference in October 2026, also in the Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge. Further details of this will be posted soon.

Steven Hunt, University of Cambridge, March 2026

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Steven Hunt is Associate Teaching Professor in Classics Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. He is subject lead for the PGCE in Latin and Classics. He has written or co-authored seven books on Classics Education, including *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages* (Bloomsbury, 2021), with Mair Lloyd.

2. Viva Voce rather than *Latine Loqui*. From a case in Flanders to the international context 6

Prof. Christian Laes is Full Professor of Ancient History at the University of Manchester, where he also teaches Latin and Ancient Greek language courses. As a former gymnasium teacher, he has kept a keen interest in the didactics of Latin and Ancient Greek – as the president of *Euroclassica* (since 2019), he has the opportunity of studying this in a wide international context. Christian is a dedicated speaker of Latin, and also president of the long-standing *Academia Latinitati Fovendae*.

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Ana Martin graduated in Classics from the University of Barcelona, and has worked as a Modern Languages, Latin and Greek teacher for the last 20 years. She is the author of several bilingual easy readers, as well as short stories for Latin learners, and runs *Latin Tutor Online*, a virtual school for pupils from all around the world. Constrained by time limitations, UK exam requirements and, quite often, schools' own use of grammar-translation books, Ana brings an active, communicative approach to her lessons, making Latin and Greek accessible, engaging, and comprehensible.

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Polly Philp is a Latin and Classics teacher at a co-ed independent secondary school in southwest London. She has degrees in Classics from the University of St Andrews (MA, Hons), from St Hugh's College, University of Oxford (MSt) and from Homerton College, University of Cambridge (MEd).

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Dr. Mair Lloyd's doctoral research at the Open University explored the effects of communicative approaches to ancient Language teaching and she continues to participate enthusiastically in spoken Latin events. She co-edited the book *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages* (Bloomsbury, 2021) with Steven Hunt. She is now an Associate Lecturer, teaching on the Open University's *Classical Latin* module and also leads on development of digital materials for the *Cambridge School Classics Project*. Mair is particularly enjoying being one of the team recording

stories from the new UK 5th Edition of the *Cambridge Latin Course* to promote listening comprehension in school learners.

Prof. James Robson is Professor of Classical Studies at the Open University, where his teaching encompasses Greek and Latin language instruction, especially at beginner's level, as well as the literature and social history of classical Athens, with a particular focus on Old Comedy, sex and sexuality, and Greek myth. He has active interests in the pedagogy of classics, especially the teaching of Latin and Greek in UK universities. His most recent book is *Aristophanes: Lysistrata* (Bloomsbury, 2023).

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Helena Walters read Classics and French, followed by an MA in Classics, at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford. She has taught Classics for several years and is now in her fifth year at Haileybury College, where she develops and delivers the teaching of Latin and Greek through the Comprehensible Input approach.

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Dr. Cressida Ryan is a disability advisor at the University of Oxford, where is also holds a fellowship at Wolfson College. She has previously been a New Testament Greek Lecturer, and taught Latin and Greek in a range of school and university contexts. Before lecturing, she spent six years in outreach, and was also formerly a school teacher. She researches the Early Modern reception of Sophocles, Neo Latin, neurodivergence, theology, and language pedagogy. She will publish her first monograph in 2026, on the relationship between pedagogy, translation theory, Greek tragedy, and the New Testament, blending her various research interests in a reading of Luther's Latin translation of the New Testament in the light of Jerome and Erasmus.

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Eugenia Manolidou is a classical music composer and, since 2017, the Director of *Elliniki Agogi*, a school founded in 1994 in Athens, dedicated to the active teaching of Ancient Greek to children and adults. She has developed innovative curricula that integrate music, drama, and visual arts into language learning, with a focus on active and experiential methods. Under her direction, *Elliniki Agogi* collaborates with universities and institutions internationally, contributing to conferences worldwide and promoting the teaching of Classics from an early age as a means of fostering linguistic awareness and cultural understanding. She is currently pursuing a degree in Classics with The Open University.

1. Conference Introduction

Steven Hunt

This is the first conference here in Cambridge University dedicated to the topic of Comprehensible Input in ancient languages. I am pleased to say that we have around 40 in-person guests here and around 230 online. This I think shows the extent of interest in the topic and the importance educators are attaching to developing teaching practices and learning experiences which are more in line with how we know that human beings acquire and learn languages.

Cambridge University is the home of the [Cambridge School Classics Project](#), which publishes the *Cambridge Latin Course*. Not far away, towards Haverhill, the [Suburani](#) Latin course is published by *Hands Up Education*. W. H. D. Rouse, the headteacher of the Perse School, just on the other side of this city, at the beginning of the 20th century, started the [Association for the Reform of Latin Teaching](#). The Association is still flourishing and I am pleased that we have one of their representatives – Ana Martin – here today giving us a paper. Cambridge is therefore an excellent place to be talking about the teaching and learning of ancient languages!

I'd like to thank Professor James Warren, then Classics Faculty Head, who last year gave me the go-ahead for running a languages conference here in the Classics Faculty. And thanks must also go to Dr. Rosanna Omitowoju, one of the languages teaching officers here in the Faculty, for being a keen supporter of the conference and a participant in the final discussion – she may not be present all the time as she has another university role to take care of during the day.

I would also thank Alice Case at [Classics for All](#), the UK charity whose ambition is to get Classics Education into more and more state schools, and which has supported us with some financial assistance.

Most of all I'd like to thank Molly Willett, who is the Access and Outreach Coordinator here in Cambridge, and who has been forever at my side working on the complex planning that such a conference requires – especially as it has grown and grown.

Without treading on the presenters' toes, I'd very briefly explain what Comprehensible Input is. Stephen Krashen¹ coined the term back in the 1980s. It was, he says, something that is not purely *his own* theory). The *use of* rather than *knowledge about* the language is the cornerstone. Everyone pretty much agrees with the idea that masses of input in the target language is an essential component of language development. This input is most easily and efficiently achieved through *listening to* and *hearing* messages that *make sense* and are at the *level of the listener* for comprehension – or uptake – to take place. Input can also be *reading* – and this is

¹ Krashen (1982).

perhaps more relevant to the learning of ancient languages, which is why most of our presenters today are going to talk about reading text rather than listening to spoken Latin or Ancient Greek. Most, but not all. If reading is the choice of input, we need to maximise the amount of reading, make sure that it is readable and compelling, so that our readers want to read more, and we need to present the material over time in a carefully structured sequence so that whatever we read at the beginning does not displace the original texts that we want to read in the future, but instead leads up to them. We might choose to optimise the comprehensibility of the reading material in various ways, as our presenters will show.

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2. *Viva Voce* rather than *Latine Loqui*. From a case in Flanders to the international context

Christian Laes

ABSTRACT

The 'active' use of Latin (and Ancient Greek) was banned for decades in Flemish schools – Flanders being a region with a strong tradition in the teaching of classical languages. About 2017, the situation changed, slowly and drastically. Less than a decade later, one sees the same change in a worldwide context of classics teaching. Language immersion and fluent reading, rather than translating and solving grammatical puzzles, come prominently to the fore, and the accessibility of internet resources has opened horizons unseen before.

1. INTRODUCTION: FROM PERSONAL ENCOUNTER TO PEDAGOGICAL QUESTIONS

When, as a university student in my early twenties, I first encountered what was then termed 'Living Latin,' I did not yet foresee that this experience would shape my professional trajectory for decades.¹ Speaking Latin aloud, hearing it used spontaneously, and discovering that the language could function as a medium of communication rather than solely as an object of analysis profoundly altered my perception of studying ancient languages. Since then, sustained engagement with spoken Latin – and, by extension, renewed attention to Ancient Greek as a living linguistic system – has led me to re-examine fundamental assumptions about how these languages are taught.

My subsequent Latin teaching experience, both in secondary schools in Flanders (Belgium) and at universities in Belgium, Italy and the United Kingdom, has sharpened these reflections. In particular with my English students, I have repeatedly observed a striking phenomenon: embarrassment and reluctance to pronounce Latin aloud. This hesitation is not confined to complex discourse; it extends even to isolated words. The difficulty is not primarily intellectual, but mainly affective. Students are unsure and often apprehensive about vocalising a language they have studied largely through silent decoding.

(*) This is a reworked version of my Keynote at the Comprehensible Input in Ancient Languages Teaching Conference, Cambridge, 24 October 2025. I owe great thanks to Steven Hunt for organising such a wonderful event. I have expressed similar thoughts in Laes (2018), but since then, the subject has constantly needed updates. I can only be grateful for such evolution.

¹ See Lyvens (2024) for a recent survey of the Living Latin movement. In gratitude, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Caelestis Eichenseer (1924-2008), who initiated me in spoken Latin, at summer seminars in Wavre, Belgium, from 1992 to 1995.

Such observations raise a central question for contemporary didactics: how should we position ourselves with respect to comprehensible input in the teaching of Latin and Ancient Greek? By all means, we should be clear about how we understand this comprehensible input – *rem tene, verba sequentur*, is a Latin motto I cherish profoundly. To me, it is all about the following question: how can we create conditions in which learners internalise meaning directly in the target language, rather than continually mediating it through translation?

To address this question, it is necessary to situate present debates within a broader historical and institutional context.

2. NIL NOVI SUB SOLE: EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PRECEDENTS

Contemporary discussions on active Latin or spoken Ancient Greek are often framed as radical innovations. Yet a brief glance at the early twentieth century reveals that many of the principles currently promoted were articulated with clarity and conviction a century ago.

In 1924, the German classicist, gymnasium teacher and progressive pedagogical thinker Georg Wilhelm Otto Rosenthal (1874-1934) published his *Lebendiges Latein. Neue Wege im Lateinunterricht* (Oldenburg, Leipzig 1924), based on his teaching experiences that had started in 1901.² Rosenthal's dictum (*Gesehenes Latein ist kein Latein*: 'seen Latin is no Latin') captures his foundational insight: without an affective, internalised relationship to the language, Latin remains inert. For Rosenthal, Latin was not merely a system of morphological paradigms, declensions and declinations. His work anticipates many current emphases on engagement, discovery, and student-centred learning.

In 1902, also in the tradition of secondary school teaching, William Henry Denman Rouse (1863-1950), an eminent classicist and Sanskrit scholar, then the new headmaster of the Perse School in Cambridge, introduced his *Direct Method for Teaching Latin and Ancient Greek*.³ Rouse, associated with the reformist tradition in British classical education, insisted that students should encounter Latin as Latin, not as an encoded version of English. In 1913, Rouse founded the [Association for the Reform of Latin Teaching \(ARLT\)](#), which is still active today. Up to now, the *ARLT* counteracts excessive reliance on translation and rote grammar drills by encouraging active engagement with texts and oral practice.

It is clear that reformers like Rosenthal and Rouse did not advocate spoken Latin as an antiquarian pastime. Rather, they viewed oral and direct methods as tools for enhancing comprehension. Reading both these eminent classicists and pedagogical

² Fritsch (1990, p. 53); Schulz (1991); Lyvens (2024, pp. 17-18).

³ Stray (1992).

thinkers today, one is struck by the continuity between their arguments and those of contemporary proponents of comprehensible input.

3. A LONGER TRADITION: FROM SCHOOL DIALOGUES TO MODERN ADVOCACY

If the early twentieth century witnessed reformist efforts for active approaches to ancient languages, earlier centuries offer evidence of an even more deeply rooted oral tradition, especially for Latin in the tradition of the West. This should not come as a surprise. Before the nineteenth century, Latin indeed functioned across Western Europe as a medium of scholarly and – to a significant extent – ‘daily’ communication: in church, liturgy, diplomacy, and to a certain degree in practical encounters such as business.

Jesuit educational practice, among others, generated extensive collections of school dialogues in Latin. These texts depict students greeting teachers, negotiating academic performance, or conversing during recreation. Such materials presuppose that Latin was heard and spoken regularly within educational contexts.⁴

The nineteenth century marked a turning point. As industrialisation and new national educational systems transformed European societies, Latin and Greek lost their prestigious cultural status. The recurrent question, ‘Why study Latin?’ emerged with new urgency. In response, some advocates reimaged Latin as a unifying language for Europe.

Among them was the Spanish priest Miguel Maria del Olmo (? – 1831), who after the Congress of Vienna (1815) envisioned a Europe united by Latin: the project of a Latin city state.⁵ Arcadius Avellanus (1851-1935), original name Árkád Mogyoróssy, published extensively in American newspapers in defence of Latin as a communicative medium: his ambitious projects, pamphlets, prolific writing activities and organisations founded all testify of the (failed) internationalist dream of Latin as the lingua franca of a new and peaceful modern world.⁶ Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895) edited and single-authored the Latin periodical *Alaudae*, while living in exile in l’Aquila, Italy. To Ulrichs, who also was a pioneering advocate of what would now be termed gay rights and because of this fled Prussian Germany, Latin could truly serve contemporary intellectual and political discourse – it is in fact hard to think of a contemporary topic that is not treated in his *Alaudae*.⁷

⁴ Tunberg (2012) is a superb overview. Laes (2014) for a remarkable example from Flanders. The *Dialogi Familiares* by Jesuit writer and teacher Antonius Van Torre became a schoolbook bestseller. Dialogues for language learning were already popular in Antiquity, see Dickey (2016). The [Colloquia Scholastica](#) on the *Vivarium Novum* website are a true treasury of material.

⁵ IJsewijn, Sacré (1993).

⁶ Lyvens (2024, pp. 87-120).

⁷ Ulrichs (2004).

These and other nineteenth-century efforts (there were in fact numerous promoters of Living Latin of that period) were often animated by a strong belief in progress and internationalism. The emergence and success of constructed and artificial languages such as Esperanto, Ido and Volapük belongs to the same intellectual climate. Although the catastrophe of the two world wars violently scattered this optimism, the aspiration to revitalise Latin as a spoken medium resurfaced periodically, in times when people were again dreaming of peace and progress in a united Europe.

4. POST-WAR REVIVAL AND INSTITUTIONALISATION

In 1956, the first International Congress for Living Latin (*Premier Congrès pour le Latin vivant*), held in Avignon and instigated by the French engineer and mathematician Jean Capelle (1909-1983) marked a renewed commitment to spoken Latin.⁸ The organising committee was convinced that Latin might serve as a neutral scientific language, to unite the scientific and politic community. A contemporary fervent proponent of Living Latin, Guy Licoppe (°1931) has repeatedly uttered his admiration for the international programme as it was initiated in Avignon – his views are often expressed in the Latin journal *Melissa*, which he has run uninterruptedly since 1984. Firmly based in the Catholic tradition, the Benedictine monk Caelestis Eichenseer (1924-2008) was a particularly influential figure for Living Latin in the later twentieth century, who cherished the international aspirations of Latin too. Through his numerous summer seminars (over hundred) all across Europe, he educated generations of teachers and enthusiast speakers. The periodical *Vox Latina*, published in Saarbrücken since 1965, and now ran by Sigrid Albert (°1952) remains a testament to sustained commitment to spoken Latin.

Yet it is crucial to carefully distinguish between two aims. On the one hand, there is the aspiration to restore Latin as a modern *lingua franca*, and ideal held dear in quite some *circuli Latini*. On the other hand, there is the didactical concern for improving comprehension of ancient texts. In a school context, the main concerns are obviously with the latter.

5. OBJECTIONS TO THE ‘ESPERANTO MODEL’

The notion that Latin might function as a contemporary international language – the ‘Esperanto model’ – raises legitimate concerns in formal educational contexts.⁹

⁸ Lyvens (2024, pp. 173-193), with an assessment of the movement.

⁹ Wingate (2013) – with whose criticism I would only agree to a minor extent. Still, I believe he makes good points. Interestingly, in some ways Luigi Miraglia, *De causis corruptae institutionis Latinae* (2014), has uttered similar criticism, at least about the hobbyist approaches of certain *Circuli Latini*. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyhWKTmJBo&t=637s> (accessed 24 February 2026).

First, the creation and teaching of neologisms risk diverting the already limited classroom time from engagement with classical texts. While coining terms for modern inventions may be intellectually playful, it is pedagogically questionable whether such vocabulary should occupy central space in the curriculum. Second, the difference of registers between spoken and written language poses real challenges. Even fluent speakers of modern conversational Latin may struggle with the stylistic density of Tacitus, or the elaborate sentences by Cicero. Mastery of colloquial discourse does not automatically confer literary competence. Third, there is the danger of hobbyism. Spoken Latin is, for many, a source of genuine pleasure. Yet enthusiasm must not be imposed as an obligation. Pedagogy cannot be structured around the preferences of a subset of practitioners. Fourth, time constraints necessitate careful prioritisation. Literary interpretation, cultural history, and thorough comprehension remain essential components of classical education. Finally, there is the issue of teachers' preparedness and willingness to introduce active approaches. Not all instructors feel equipped to conduct conversations in Latin or Ancient Greek. Any prescriptive reform is difficult.

For these reasons, conversational fluency cannot and should not be posited as the primary objective of Latin and Greek instruction. Nevertheless, elements of active engagement may serve broader pedagogical ends, as I will demonstrate in what follows.

6. THE FLEMISH CONTEXT: PROHIBITION AND RECONSIDERATION

In Flanders, curricular developments since the late 1960s provide a telling case study. Earlier decades had witnessed intensive grammatical training, often supported by detailed manuals such as the famous Greek and Latin grammars by Jesuit Adhemar Geerebaert (1871 – 1944). Students devoted substantial weekly hours to Latin, yet frequently emerged unable to read fluently or compose effectively. The perceived failure of this model led to a decisive reaction: active use of Latin and Ancient Greek was formally discouraged or even prohibited. Reading and translation became the exclusive focus.

When, in 2017, a study day at the University of Antwerp addressed active approaches to Latin and Ancient Greek, the diversity of participants – students, teachers, inspectors, university professors – was striking. Although official curricula had long marginalised spoken elements, many educators had independently experimented with alternative methods. The event revealed both renewed interest and institutional hesitation.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a brief report, see Laes (2017).

A central topic was the role of easy readers versus the tendency to almost immediately go for 'authentic' Latin as it had been composed by writers of the Golden Age. Just as students of Russian rarely begin with Tolstoy, learners of Latin benefit from texts calibrated to their current competence. Short novellas employing limited vocabulary - sometimes as few as 500 words - allow for extended reading without constant recourse to dictionaries. The motivational impact of such experiences in fluent reading should not be underestimated. The subsequent publication of accessible Latin and Greek materials in the Low Countries further demonstrated that comprehensible input could coexist with rigorous standards of efficient language learning.¹¹

7. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

From discussions and subsequent classroom practice on comprehensible input, several principles emerge.

Early and Consistent Exposure to Spoken Language

Students should hear Latin or Greek from the very beginning of their studies. This does not entail elaborate theoretical lectures on pronunciation and phonology for beginners. Rather, instructors should model consistent pronunciation in routine classroom interactions. Over time, learners internalise phonetic patterns naturally.

Reading Aloud as Norm, Preferably Easy Dialogues

Reading is not solely a visual act. When students read texts aloud from the beginning of their studies, direct comprehension becomes habitual rather than exceptional. In advanced courses, collective reading out of metrical passages can precede individual performance, gradually building confidence.

Listening Without Textual Support

Listening exercises without written texts cultivate auditory processing skills. Short spoken passages may be introduced once or twice, followed by simple questions regarding content. Only subsequently is the written version introduced for closer analysis. Digital platforms now provide abundant recordings of adapted and authentic materials for easy listening.

Comprehension Checks in the Target Language

Simple yes/no questions or closed questions that only require brief responses in Latin or Greek reinforce syntax and vocabulary without imposing heavy productive demands. Such exercises emphasise understanding over translation.

¹¹ Laes (2021).

Music and Poetry

Hearing metrically complex poetry performed correctly demystifies its structure. Musical settings of canonical passages can make grammar memorable. Teachers need not perform themselves. High-quality recordings of ancient poetry are widely available, witness the *Tyrtarion* choir of *Vivarium Novum*.

Grammar Introduced by Play

Interactive activities illustrating grammatical topics – such as the indirect question or the infinitive clause – enable students to perceive structural differences dynamically rather than abstractly: *Video Marcum intrantem*. → *Video Marcum intrare*. / *Marcus flet*. → *Quid dixisti? Dixi Marcum flere*. / *Pluit*. → *Rogo an pluat*.

Immersive Textbooks

The paradigm of immersive narrative remains *Lingua Latina per se illustrata* by Hans Ørberg. Its sustained Latin-only exposition, supported by images and marginal notes, exemplifies the immersive approach of the true language-bath. Comparable methods for Ancient Greek have likewise emerged.¹²

8. THE CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE: 2017–2024 AND BEYOND

An increased attention to active approaches worldwide, combined with an accelerating international collaboration regarding these methods are evolutions I have witnessed since 2019, when I was elected president of the long-standing [Euroclassica](#) organisation.¹³ The annual conference *Nova et Vetera* of 2024 at Villa Falconieri in Frascati, the home of the [Vivarium Novum](#), explicitly connected current innovations with early twentieth-century reforms.¹⁴

What distinguishes the present moment is not merely enthusiasm, but also the increased possibility of mediums like the internet and subsequent distance learning. Just consider audio recordings of Ancient Greek. Once scarce, they are now abundant. Weekly broadcasts such as *Acropolis News* by University of St Andrews Classicist Juan Coderch now immerse students into every-day Ancient Greek on a weekly basis. Institutions and initiatives indeed proliferate: academies teach the immersive method, there are summer schools, online courses, and digital archives. In the bibliography, I offer a highly selective list of website and initiatives, out of which every teacher can pick what (s)he wishes. The result is unprecedented accessibility of superb quality.

¹² <https://subsidia.vivariumnovum.it/> (under *Familia Romana* and *Roma Aeterna*, for Latin and *Athenaze I* and *Athenaze II*, for Ancient Greek) offers about everything a teacher can wish for, not the least by the outstanding efforts and didactical publications of Luigi Miraglia. See also Díaz Ávila (2014) for an Ancient Greek immersive reader, going back to W. Rouse.

¹³ Hunt & Bulwer (2025).

¹⁴ Laes (2025).

9. CONCLUSION: THE AGE OF COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

The present era may legitimately be described as the age of comprehensible input in classical language pedagogy. This does not entail abandoning translation, literary analysis, or philological precision. It does, however, require acknowledging that understanding arises most securely when learners encounter language as meaningful discourse rather than as a puzzle-like exercise.

Active elements – listening, reading aloud, easy readers, interactive questioning – should therefore be understood not as ends in themselves but as means to deeper textual competence. When students hear, speak and read Latin or Ancient Greek with increasing fluency, the transition to complex authors becomes less abrupt. The language ceases to be an alien code and becomes instead a structured yet intelligible medium.

Reform in Classics Education has always oscillated between innovation and reaction. The challenge today is not to resort to polarisation – repeating controversies from the past. We should rather strive to integrate insights from diverse traditions. If we retain clarity of our purpose – *rem tene* – the appropriate methods will follow. *Verba sequuntur*. And in the end, we will come to a better understanding of ancient texts and writers, the ultimate aim of our classical languages teaching.

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Classical Greek and Latin: <https://coderch-greek-latin-grammar.weebly.com/>

Cultura Clasica: <https://culturaclasica.com/>

Elliniki Agogi: <https://ellinikiagogi.gr/en/>

Latinitium: <https://latinitium.com/> (Latin Audio Archive and the Pugio Bruti easy reader)

Polis: www.polisjerusalem.org

Schola Humanistica: <https://www.scholahumanistica.com/>

Schola Latina: <https://scholalatina.it/en/>

Vivarium Novum: www.vivariumnovum.net (Subsidia and Tyrtarion in particular)

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3. On Optimal Input and Actual Input: How can we turn rote memorisers into readers?

Ana Martin

ABSTRACT

As part of the Comprehensible Input in Ancient Languages Teaching Conference Ana Martin (*Latin Tutor Online*; University of Barcelona alumna) shared practical examples from her online Latin teaching, showing how storytelling, images, gestures and digital interactivity can enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension within examination constraints.

PRESENTATION

Ideally, input should be just one level above the current level (i+1).¹ However, pupils who are studying Latin in the UK must prepare for official examinations that require dealing with texts containing large amounts of previously unseen vocabulary.

In this session, first I look at the different vocabulary presentation methods currently in use in published textbooks and online resources, then I outline the desirable process to foster fluent reading rather than translation, and finally I present an example of how this can be applied to an A level Verse Unseen.²

Vocabulary introduction and glossary presentation across Latin textbooks:³

- *Latin to GCSE* and *Latin Beyond GCSE*: glossary in order of appearance at the bottom of the text, underlined.
- *Cambridge Latin Course*: glossary on the right side of the text, not underlined.
- *De Romanis*: vocabulary pre-taught by part of speech, and then glossary at the bottom of the text in order of appearance, underlined.
- *Suburani*: combination of glossary on the right of the text and boxes across the graphic novel style sections, not underlined).
- *Lingua Latina per se illustrata*: glossary on the right and left side of the text, depending on the side of the book, not underlined.
- 'Kilpelätion' and deictic boxes/visual aids used in online resources (e.g. *Marcellus* and *Legentibus*).
- Interlinear translations.
- Online use of *Suburani* and *Cambridge Latin Course* where all words are hyperlinked to the dictionary.

¹ See Krashen (1982).

² A level examinations are taken by pupils aged 18+. Success at A levels provides access to universities. The verse unseen is a component of the examination in which pupils translate a passage of around 15 lines of pentameters or hexameters taken from Ovid. For details, see <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/220734-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-latin-h443.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2026).

³ Details of these books are given in the Bibliography section of this chapter.

Having used all these methods and based on classroom observations, I propose an efficient way to introduce new vocabulary in a static textbook/handout: interweave it into the text through boxes and images, allowing for seamless transitions and retention. I also discuss the dangers of unrestricted online look-up tools, which can turn reading into transcribing exercises, with little pedagogical value.

In my online classroom at [Latin Tutor Online](https://www.latin-tutor.com/), my focus to foster a reading-over-translation approach involves:

1. Semantic and auditory priming.
2. Social interaction and engagement.
3. Lowering affective filter: speaking vs private writing.
4. Multi-modal acquisition.

As an example, I present an input-rich acquisition-focused approach to reading Horace's *Fons Bandusiae*.

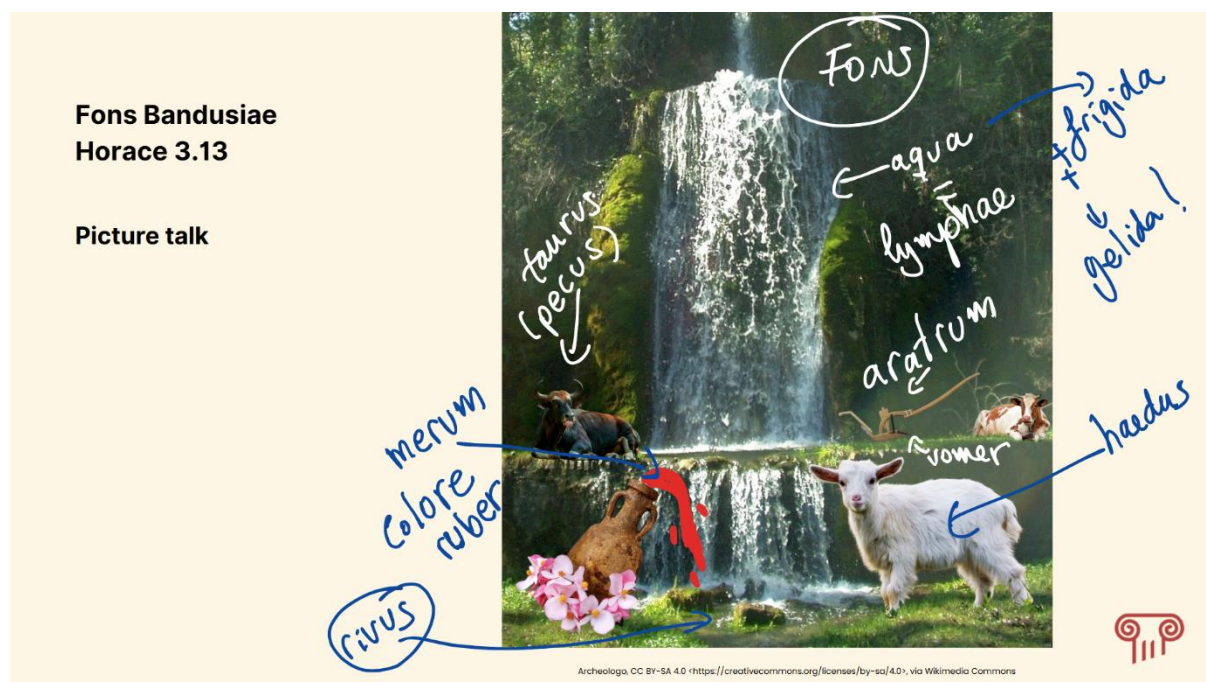


Figure 1: Input-for-acquisition-rich image for Horace's *Fons Bandusiae*

It is October, so we are going to talk about *Fontanalia* and use the text to understand sacrifices at fountains (1, 2). Rules of engagement are explained: the affective filter is lowered by allowing for speaking/gesturing/private writing in chat (2, 3). I then set out to prime the vocabulary I have previously chosen using picture talk (1, 2, 3, 4). We annotate together an image created for the poem (see Figure 1). Consolidation is achieved by playing with the images and discussing the changes in Latin (1, 2, 3, 4): e.g elements are removed from the image and pupils spot them, and questions about relative position are asked, including T[true] or F[false] responses, etc. Finally, pupils tackle the original text with very minimal glossing.

Key takeaway: We are preparing pupils for a translation exam, but it is neither necessary nor desirable to train for it by means of repeated translation practice. A multimodal, interactive, input-rich and conversational approach is necessary to make the text comprehensible and a true source of effective input likely to lead to acquisition.

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4. Reading Tacitus with A Level Pupils: Prioritising Latin over translation

Polly Philp

ABSTRACT

In her MEd (Transforming Practice) research project, completed 2023-2024, Polly Philp investigated how to help A level pupils in their struggle with Latin literature to develop their understanding and responses, with a case study on teaching Tacitus' *Annals* 12 to a Year 12 class. It argues that prioritising reading of the Latin itself, rather than responding to an English translation, helps pupils to engage more deeply with the text. It investigates classroom practice, homework exercises and assessment, informed by research on teaching reading in a second language and the practical restraints of the assessment criteria and requirements of A level. It involved the creation of a series of preparation exercises to serve as a foundation for independent engagement with the set text, and an investigation into the most effective sequencing of tasks and questioning to promote deeper engagement with literature.

PRESENTATION

We have to take for granted that at A level,¹ the level of language ability that is expected of pupils is far beyond their level. The rationale of my research project, which was a case study, was how can I help A level literature pupils develop their understanding and responses. I had the idea from essentially the frustration of giving them texts that are far too difficult, but not wanting to just spoon feed them, or handhold.

I was frustrated with the sequencing and the delivery of my literature lessons and trying to talk about Latin as Latin; not doing an English translation, doing all the analysis of the English and then sort of matching it back up to the Latin. So that was my rationale. I did a small case study. It was a thematic analysis with two research questions.

¹ A level examinations are taken by pupils aged 18+. Success at A levels provides access to universities. Prose Literature is a component of the examination in which pupils translate and comment on set texts in detail.

First, with an elaborate thematic map I made (Figure 1): what strategies could I implement to help pupils read Latin literature?

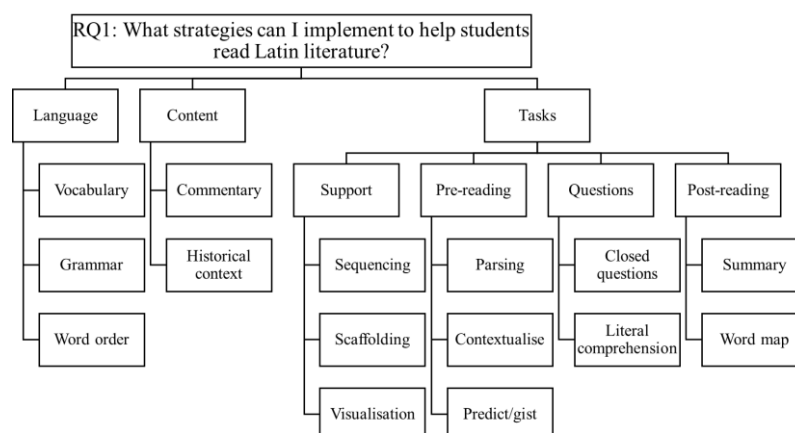


Figure 1: A diagram of the themes and sub-themes used to answer the first research question, breaking down elements of language and teaching that were addressed.

I divided this question into: what are the difficulties, and what are the things I do. So, for instance, issues with language vocabulary. My pupils do the WJEC GCSE:² they have about 500 words of Latin. To understand something when you are reading it, Nation suggests what you need is 98-99 per cent of vocabulary.³ I looked at just the first sentence of Tacitus that you have to read and they knew about 10 per cent. So, vocabulary is a big issue. Grammar at GCSE is also very sheltered in what you know; and then in Tacitus, there is a very high register, such as with grammar and word order. I have studied Tacitus for years and I enjoy how complicated it is, but I am teaching pupils who at GCSE at literature have only ever had the language with handholding. Very simply: is there something I can do where, as part of the process, I reorder Tacitus' language in a way that the pupils would expect it; not putting it into an English word order but putting it into something where they would expect to follow the Latin, for example the subject at the beginning, verb at the end. And then it is also quite interesting for stylistic analysis. We can look at the actual word order and ask: what is interesting about this?

In terms of the actual content, we need to consider historical context. The first bit of Tacitus that we read, you needed to know the whole family tree of the imperial family. I myself struggle to remember what 'first-cousin-once-removed' means and I'm looking at these really elaborate family trees: what can we do to try to help simplify that? And so on, with establishing just the essential historical context.

Next, I will discuss the tasks that I give pupils (the sequencing, the scaffolding, visualising things that can be seen in Figure 1), for example, the pre-reading activities, the actual questions I ask when we are doing the reading, and post-reading activities

² WJEC (Welsh Joint Examinations Council) is a national examinations board which offers Latin examinations for GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) for pupils aged 16.

³ Nation (2001, in Grabe, 2009).

as well, which consolidate information, and so on. At first, I break down sentences in quite minute detail, with very literal, closed comprehension questions. In the pre-reading activities, the pupils parse verbs; hopefully, that's also going to complement their language study, giving them a scaffold, like a spine of a passage just with the verbs. This is because part of being able to read fluently is developing automaticity: being able to look at a verb and knowing and understanding grammatical detail as well as the semantic meaning.⁴

Next, context, predicting and 'gisting'. To be able to predict what is going on and what is going to happen next in a story, you have to understand what has already happened; you need to understand plot, character, and so on. When they have done this preparation exercise, they have not written out a full translation; all they have done is get the overall gist of the passage and answered some questions. The exercise shows them that they can understand and summarise what is happening in a passage, even without a translation. Although I do not think my pupils believe me, translation is not the same thing as reading.⁵ So, I try to really drive home that reading and understanding comes before translation.

Then, my second research question, which concerns how I can also help them to engage with their set text. I wondered about what I can do as a teacher, cold calling all the time, balanced with pupils volunteering, and also different kinds of comprehension questions. This can be seen in Figure 2.

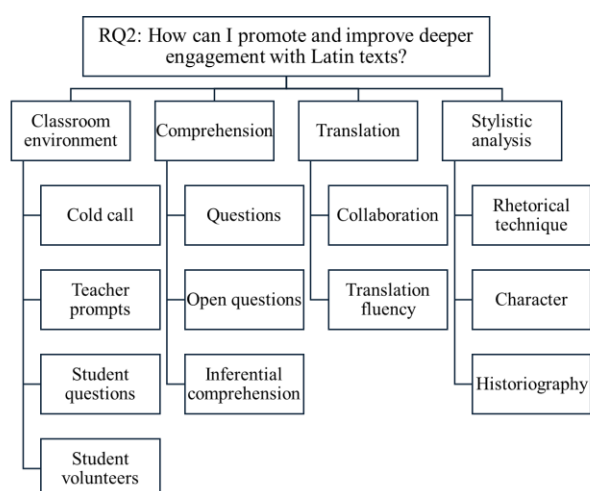


Figure 2: A diagram of themes and sub-themes used to answer the second research question, breaking down elements of the classroom environment, comprehension questions, and approaches to translation and stylistic analysis.

Eventually we do get to a translation; there is translation in the exam, but we do not always need to focus on translation. I try to give pupils ownership of their literature and translation in lessons: after we have done all the discussion and analysis, only then do we do a translation, and it is the pupil who does the translation and the other pupils listen to that pupil's translation. I am not the author of the translation. I give the pupils

⁴ Grabe (2009).

⁵ Hoyos (1997; 2006).

some hints, for example, 'Oh, can we do a bit more a natural wording there?' or I give a bit of correction on grammar. However, I try not to make it so that the pupils just listen to me at the end.

For practical advice, I will give some examples of what I do for my planning and lessons. Part of my Master's degree was to develop an artefact, which for me was a selection of preparation exercises that I made for Tacitus. I have 1 hour and 15 minutes a week with my literature pupils, with a weekly homework routine: either learning a bit of the set text or preparing the next bit. My pupils very quickly get into the routine of this, and over the course of the year I reduce the scaffolding of the exercises more and more.

For instance, there are pre-reading exercises, as I mentioned before, with a vocabulary focus. The pupils parse verbs – they do not know how to do this already. So, at first, I give really explicit instructions; I select all the verbs and participles for them; I may ignore things like gerundives at this point because they do not know what they are. But, as the year progresses, they need to find the verbs themselves. Maybe I will give some hints, like a number of bullet points, but by the end of the year, they find them entirely by themselves. This then helps with other pre-reading activities, with contextualising the passage. They have had to look up a lot of vocabulary, with their vocabulary gloss, but they have to get familiar with the vocabulary based on their parsing exercise. I then ask them to predict the gist of the passage, as the verbs often give you a spine for the story. I ask: 'What's going on in the passage?' They then have to write a sentence or two. They have already contextualised this passage, based on the previous passage; I may give them a more leading question, for example with Tacitus: 'What have Nero and Agrippina been arguing about?' All this is before they actually read the whole passage properly.

For the comprehension questions, I give the pupils lists of questions, per sentence. When I first started creating these exercises, it took me a long time to prepare, but now I'm used to the method. This comprehension is in English, in part because of practicality, considering the quantity of what we need to read at A level. I focus on beginning with literal comprehension, but at the end I may add in questions to start thinking about style and characterisation. Sometimes, to help, I would reorder the Latin sentence – not in an English word order, but in a more expected word order for them. Then at the end, I can say: 'Now, look at the original sentence, and how does this work in comparison? Does this order put emphasis on certain parts of the sentence?'

They then have summary questions at the end. At this point, they have not done any translation, just comprehension activities. I may add some other fun little things, like a word map for consolidating vocabulary.

I find that by doing these preparation exercises, in this sequence, in lessons we can much more quickly get to what is actually going on in the text. I can correct any misapprehensions, and we go through the questions, chunk by chunk. I will call on a pupil to answer a set of questions, then we do our stylistic analysis – word order,

vocabulary and so on – and then, only after we have done all the questions, comprehension, style, do we do the translation. This whole time they need to have in their mind their understanding of the text, but they're not just staring at their English translation, playing match. Fundamentally, it's a *Latin A* level. This is probably the main change I made to my sequencing. I think that, probably, the pupils find it a bit frustrating, because they don't have that comfort and crutch of the English translation (and sometimes, I might forget about the English translation and start to move on!). It also requires a high level of oracy as well; the pupils have to be really engaged; sometimes it can be a bit tiring to me to be 'on' all the time with them. However, I do think it helps with their depth of engagement and their consolidation of the text, because they've prepared it first, then we've gone through it in a lesson, then they have to learn it for a test, and later for revision. Part of really getting to know a text is that constant rereading, and trying to read it multiple times.

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5. A Game of Two Halves: Enhancing student learning with comprehensible – and incomprehensible – input at the Open University

Mair E. Lloyd and James Robson

ABSTRACT

The Open University module *Classical Latin: The Language of ancient Rome* innovates in combining language acquisition with the study of Roman culture and literature in translation. In this paper, we outline how beginner students engage with a range of materials in their studies, including complex literary texts in the original language. We then argue for the importance of listening comprehension in contributing to the fluent reading comprehension of Latin texts and describe some activities Mair uses to help her students develop their listening comprehension skills.

1. CONTEXT

Each year around 200 students take their first steps in Latin with the help of the Open University module *Classical Latin: The language of ancient Rome*. This is no standard beginners' Latin module, however: its innovative pedagogical approach, combining as it does the *ab initio* acquisition of Latin language with the study of Roman history, civilisation and literature in translation, makes *Classical Latin* a 'game of two halves' – one that places equal importance on gaining an understanding of Roman culture and the development of linguistic competence and that also recognises each endeavour as complementing the other. Nor is the innovative nature of this module limited to its structure and content. The academic team that developed the *Classical Latin* module materials, as well as many of the Associate Lecturers who tutor our students, have in various ways sought to generate, adapt and experiment with new pedagogical approaches in an effort to support and improve student learning. It is two of these experimental approaches that form the subject of this paper and make it too a 'game of two halves.' First, the use of what the authors are calling 'Incomprehensible Input': namely, activities based on unadapted passages of classical Latin which, unusually for an *ab initio* module, see beginners engaging with original texts that they are not yet able to translate. And second, in strong contrast with this, the provision of opportunities for students to experience and appreciate – both aurally and orally – Latin texts of a level that can be comprehended with their current linguistic proficiency while also promoting new language acquisition. These latter activities are consistent with the principles of Comprehensible Input (CI) in that, through them, students acquire new vocabulary and understanding of language features by meeting them in texts that are accessible at their current skill level and that allow them to build on their current capabilities.¹ The activities demonstrated augment the effectiveness of this

¹ The concept of 'Comprehensible Input' originated in Stephen Krashen's 'Input Hypothesis', one of five hypotheses outlined in his early language acquisition research. It proposes that learners acquire language when they understand input at one stage above their current level. He denoted their current level by 'i' and the level slightly above by 'i+1': Krashen (1982, pp. 21-29). For further definitions and

‘comprehensible input’ by scaffolding understanding with expressive reading, gesture and images. Crucially, the spirit in which they are undertaken is also intended to encourage lively and relaxed engagement from students in line with research into the influence of emotional factors on language learning.²

In the spirit of wishing to share our practice with fellow instructors and to inform and inspire others’ experiments in Latin teaching, we outline in this paper how we have used both ‘Incomprehensible Input’ and Comprehensible Input in our teaching, detailing what we see as the benefits of these approaches as we go. In the sections that follow, we first provide a brief overview of the *Classical Latin* module, including its design and pedagogical ambitions, then go on to outline our experiments with ‘Incomprehensible Input’ and Comprehensible Input respectively, before drawing the threads of our discussion together in our conclusion.

The teaching practices we describe in this paper draw inspiration from pedagogical research into the learning of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) as well as the emerging field of ancient language pedagogy. Like many MFL researchers, we feel that different theories need not necessarily be considered to be in conflict with one another, but rather provide alternative approaches to the challenges faced by instructors and students, and open our subject to the varied needs and preferences of individual students. This paper’s focus on the polar opposites of ‘Incomprehensible’ and Comprehensible Input demonstrates our openness and the eclectic practices that we employ with our students.

2. CLASSICAL LATIN: THE LANGUAGE OF ANCIENT ROME

The context in which Open University (OU) students learn Latin is A276 *Classical Latin: The language of ancient Rome*, a module aimed at complete beginners and largely taken as an optional component of either the BA Classical Studies or BA Arts & Humanities programmes.³ The radical way in which *Classical Latin* differs from similar modules at brick universities is that, like all OU modules, it is taught at a distance, using a mixture of print materials, interactive resources, and online tutorials.⁴ As mentioned above, it differs in terms of its structure, too, since it consists of two intertwined components: a language acquisition strand and a Roman civilisation strand. In each week, then, learners study both Latin language and related aspects

discussion of CI and its origins, see, for example: Rodgers & Richards (2014, pp. 264-267); Patrick (2015); Lloyd (2017, pp. 44-49 and 62-63); and Hunt (2022, pp. 51-58).

² The ‘Affective Filter Hypothesis’, a further language acquisition hypothesis put forward by Krashen, emphasises the importance of emotional factors: Krashen (1982, pp. 29-31). For a recent overview of the role of emotions in language learning, see Resnick *et al.* (2025).

³ Of the 230 students taking this module in 2025-26, 149 (65 per cent) were registered for a BA in Classical Studies and 40 (17 per cent) for a BA in Arts & Humanities, with the remainder taking A276 either as a standalone module or an elective part of another degree programme.

⁴ Notable, too, is that this is worth 60 CATS points, and so equivalent to half a year’s full-time study in a conventional university. In other UK HEIs, Latin modules are usually worth 15, 20 or 30 credits: see Lloyd & Robson (2023, p. 6).

of the history, literature and culture of ancient Rome (the main focus being on the Augustan era).

The language strand is relatively traditional in many ways, with students' work each week centred on reading and translating carefully graded synthetic Latin texts (mainly based on stories from Livy) and mastering new vocabulary and grammar. As is common with this kind of 'reading approach', there is an inductive element to grammar acquisition, with language features met in context before they are explicitly explained.⁵ The reading passages and grammar exercises benefit from some careful handholding and scaffolding as befits a beginners' context: generous reading notes are provided for the passages, for example, which are also supported by a Story Explorer (an online tool where students can click on individual words to reveal their meaning and parsing). This scaffolding spills over into the grammar exercises, too, which are designed to be eminently doable – as well as varied – with a view to building confidence and maintaining student interest.

The literature/culture strand is no doubt the more innovative element of *Classical Latin*. This forms a significant part of the module, with students spending roughly half their time studying Roman history and literature in translation. There are a number of advantages to this way of structuring the module, but the most important aspects of this pedagogical approach to highlight here are that:

1. It aims to integrate language learning into students' broader study of the ancient world (see further below⁶); and
2. It sees acquiring an understanding of Roman culture as a central part of both language learning and of linguistic competence.

Point 2 is aligned with the concept of Schema Theory, a schema being a 'set of assumptions formed through mental organisation of life experiences' (so a schema surrounding food shopping, for example, might involve unspoken assumptions about the use of supermarket trolleys and checkouts⁷). Crucially, schemata are never wholly identical for any two people and the possibility of a mismatch between the schemata of the writer/speaker and reader/listener is naturally that much greater the more their cultural backgrounds differ (assumptions around food shopping, e.g. between ancient and modern societies, being just one case in point).

The potential gap between the schemata of modern English speakers and those of ancient Roman writers is something we choose to address in the module by making the acquisition of cultural knowledge a central part of the learning journey. The

⁵ For an analysis of the pedagogical approaches of Latin and Greek textbooks, see Gay (2003). This is usefully supplemented by Hunt (2023, pp. 11-43) who provides a more recent overview of (and reflections on) contemporary approaches to the teaching and learning of Latin.

⁶ One objective was for the module to serve as an end in itself – and not just a stepping stone for more advanced study of the language.

⁷ Lloyd (2017, p. 68), drawing on Nuttall (2005, pp. 4-7). While Schema Theory has been subject to a certain amount of critique, it remains an influential and much-cited concept in MFL and ESL research.

principle here is that students' linguistic competence will be enhanced through awareness of the culture of those who spoke and wrote it. Importantly, however, for a module deliberately split between language and culture, we also see this process as working the other way round, too: that is to say, we believe that students can also better understand a culture through knowledge of its language. Not that this connection between language and culture is a new idea, of course, even in the context of Latin learning. It is, for example, foreshadowed by John Wilkins, one of the researchers behind the first edition of the *Cambridge Latin Course* (CLC) who proposes that knowledge of cultural and literary conventions is just as important to the acquisition of Latin as the mastery of formal grammar. In his 1969 formulation of a theory of classical language learning, Wilkins asserts that:

... the purely mechanistic skill [of decoding Latin] is ... difficult to teach, and the reason is that in so doing we are trying to separate off the cultural and literary aspects, which are just as much an integral part of the language as the formal grammar ... It is a fallacy, unfortunately widespread and deep-rooted, that we can learn language first ... and then move on to its literature and culture.⁸

Where the CLC broke new ground others followed, and many Latin and Greek beginners' textbooks developed over the last 50 years have sought to introduce a cultural component to support language acquisition (as well as to pique and sustain student interest in the language, no doubt). The innovation of the OU's *Classical Latin* module is the extent to which this element is foregrounded.⁹

So, how do we provide this literary and cultural input? As mentioned above, the thread that runs throughout the three Blocks of the module and binds the module materials together is the graded Latin reading passages, based on Livy. Through these, students learn about Roman history and culture, of course, but this knowledge is then used as a springboard for further study with various activities requiring students to engage with Livy's narrative in a critical way. In Block 1 of the module, for example, students look at the quasi-mythical account of early Rome that Livy constructs for his audience and compare this with the rest of the surviving evidence base for this period, studying both modern scholarship on early Rome and its material remains. As their studies progress, they move on to consider Roman ethics and morality, focusing in Block 2 on the theme of *exempla* which is so prominent in Livy. Students encounter other Augustan texts, too, such as the *Aeneid* (in Block 2) and erotic elegy (in Block

⁸ Wilkins (1969, p. 176).

⁹ The assessment of the module reflects this dual focus of students' learning. In the in-course assignments, just under half the marks are connected to grammar and translation questions, the rest deriving from short essays, some of which are on cultural topics while others are based around engagement with parallel translations. The exam is split into three parts: the first is purely linguistic (grammar and translation) and the third involves writing an essay on a literary-cum-cultural theme. For the second part, students can choose *either* a more advanced linguistic option *or* to compare and contrast two translations of a Latin passage (for which the original passage is also provided).

3), considering the ways in which different authors and genres reflect, problematise and, indeed, undermine Augustan values.

3. 'INCOMPREHENSIBLE' INPUT: WORKING WITH PARALLEL LATIN / ENGLISH TEXTS

Two further themes in *Classical Latin* are translation and translation theory. Students read texts in translation in this module – just as they read English translations of texts in their non-linguistic modules, of course – the difference being that they are increasingly invited to think about the process of translation in theoretical as well as practical terms. As the module progresses, students are invited to engage with the original Latin passages on which particular translations are based in ever more sophisticated ways. This is done by:

- looking at the translation of key words (e.g. the way translators render concepts such as *gloria*, *virtus*, *furor*);
- working with parallel texts (e.g. by looking how key words and key lines can or have been translated); and
- examining different translations of the same passage of Latin.

These activities are supported by discussions and readings in the module materials. For example, in Block 2 of the module students reflect on 'How to read a Latin poem' in a discussion which introduces them to features such as word order, sound, metre and figurative language through examples taken from the *Aeneid*.¹⁰ This ends with an activity based around Horace *Odes* 1.5 (*quis multa gracilis te puer ...?*) where students are invited to engage with the Latin text alongside an English translation, aided by an audio reading of the poem which they access via the module website. Importantly, students are also encouraged to read lines of Latin poetry aloud for themselves and to take pleasure in working with these original texts. It is activities such as these, where students work with unadapted Latin texts (whose grammar and vocabulary they are largely unable to understand at this stage in their studies), that we are calling Incomprehensible Input.

Later in the module, students' work on Latin texts and translation is extended in a section on 'How to read and translate a Latin poem'.¹¹ Here, students consider some of the ways in which scholars working in the field of Translation Studies understand and engage with concepts such as faithfulness, 'domestication' and 'foreignisation',¹² and audience – drawing once again on their previous study of Latin poetry. The section culminates in an engaging audio, where students hear from an academic

¹⁰ Swift *et al.* (2015, pp. 179-95).

¹¹ Paul *et al.* (2015, pp. 55-68).

¹² Terms originating with Venuti. 'Foreignisation' involves translating the text in such a way as to make readers aware that they are reading a text in translation (for example, by including anachronisms or by reflecting the word order of the original text), whereas 'domestication' involves 'reduc[ing]...the foreign text to target language cultural values' so as to make it immediately recognisable and intelligible to a reader (Venuti, 1995, p. 20).

(William Fitzgerald) and an academic-cum-translator (Henry Stead) about the practicalities and decisions that the process of translation involves. As part of this, students meet various translation of *Catullus* 63, and are invited to compare the original Latin text of the beginning of the poem not only with Guy Lee's *Oxford World Classics* translation but also with Stead's own version, which the author has previously delivered as part of a multi-media performance.¹³

Catullus 63.1-5

super alta vecta Attis celeri rate maria
Phrygium ut nemus citato cupide pede tetigit
adiitque opaca silvis redimita loca deae,
stimulatus ibi furente rabie, vagus animi,
devolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice.

Guy Lee, The Poems of Catullus

Over the high seas Attis, carried in a speedy craft,
When he touched the grove in Phrygia eagerly with hurrying feet
And approached the Goddess' gloomy forest-girt domain,
There, by raving madness goaded, his wits astray,
He tore off with a sharp flint the burden of his groin.

Henry Stead, Attis

Over the heights of the marine deep
driven fast in a speeding ship
Attis with feisty foot touched down
and sped to the Phrygian grove
He landed at the evergreen
land of the goddess
and molten with madness mind
in a trance with a slit
and a slice of a sharp flint stone
tore off the weights of his groin ...

¹³ Lee (1990). For an 'audiovisual translation' of Stead's poem, see:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eRbRBHd6HI> (accessed 26 February 2026).

Towards the end of the module, students are assessed on the skills they have developed through these activities. Part of the final assignment in the module requires them to compare and contrast two translations of a single passage – an exercise for which they are given the original Latin to refer to as well (see Figure 1).

Part 3 (50 marks)

In no more than 1,000 words, compare and contrast the versions of the passage from Virgil, *Aeneid* 12, given in Extracts 1 and 2 below. You should pay close attention to the different ways in which each poet chooses to translate Virgil's text, and the effects that these choices have on your reading of it. Do you find one translation, or parts of one of them, more effective than the other? You do not need to refer to the Latin text (Extract 3), but you may choose to do so if you wish.

These extracts are from the very end of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the last duel between Aeneas and Turnus. You are presented with two very different translations, a modern one (Extract 1) and a much older one (Extract 2). These two translations are very different in tone and style, and the one that you will read in Extract 2 is longer (so you will find that the line numbers are different both to Virgil's original and to the translation in Extract 1). The Latin text of this passage is provided in Extract 3. Note that in order to score high marks you need not refer to the original Latin; however, credit may be given if you do so.

**Extract 1: *The Aeneid*, translated by Shadi Bartsch
Book 12, 919–939**

As Turnus faltered, Aeneas saw his chance.
Raising his fatal spear, he put all his body 920
in the throw. No stone hurled from a siege engine
ever roared so loudly, no clap of thunder ever
crashed like this. The spear flew, a black tornado

Figure 1: A screenshot of part the final assignment of *Classical Latin: The language of ancient Rome*

Students are not obliged to engage with the Latin in this assignment (indeed, they are explicitly told that they can still score high marks if they do not). Most choose to do so, however, with some integrating discussion of the original Latin in pleasingly sophisticated ways.

One of the skills that students are being encouraged to develop through exercises of this kind is what we refer to as 'reading through translation'; that is to say, the ability to work with an English translation of a text in an informed way, with a sense of what might have been gained and lost in the process of translation – and with a sense, too, of the kind of questions that might reasonably be asked about the original text that lies behind it. There is also the ambition of making authentic literary Latin texts seem less daunting and of empowering students by exposing them to discussions of literary language and form in the discussions provided in the teaching materials. While Latin beginners would, of course, struggle to translate the unadapted poetry they meet, they can nevertheless be successfully exposed to features such as non-standard word order and sound effects such as assonance and alliteration. What students are taught,

we suggest, are useful, transferable skills that they can apply to the rest of their degree studies when they encounter literary sources in English translation (aided by parallel texts when appropriate). Importantly, too, developing in learners the skills of ‘reading through translation’ and working with parallel texts can help to bring together two strands of their studies – the linguistic and non-linguistic – which are regularly taught and conceived of separately in Classical Studies and Ancient History degree programmes. That is to say, central our pedagogical approach is an ambition to transform a ‘game of two halves’ into a more unified whole.¹⁴

4. COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT: LISTENING TO LATIN IN TUTORIALS

As well as online resources and print books, the OU’s model of distance learning includes tutorials, most commonly provided online in live (‘synchronous’) sessions led by an Associate Lecturer (AL). It is in this context that Mair, who has worked as an AL on the *Classical Latin* module for several years, builds on the principles of Comprehensible Input to deliver another of the ambitions we have for the module, namely enabling students to read, hear and understand Latin of an appropriate level with accuracy, fluency and enjoyment. While all students are able to listen privately to audio recordings of their Latin translation passages, which are available on the module website, Mair’s ambition for students who choose to attend her tutorials is for them to be able to read, listen to and understand Latin passages in Latin without turning them into English at all.¹⁵

One of the theories Mair draws on to justify her emphasis on understanding oral Latin input is the Simple View of Reading (SVR). While acknowledging the complexities involved in the process of reading, SVR claims that reading comprehension is built on two key components: (i) the ability to decode written words and make them into (internal) sound; and (ii) the ability to make meaning from that internal sound.¹⁶ According to SVR, then, the act of reading only differs from the act of listening in that it requires the additional task of turning marks on a page into sound.¹⁷ SVR has been extended to cover second language learning by Verhoeven and van Leeuw, who note that, without listening comprehension, reading comprehension is at risk.¹⁸ In her own work, Mair has suggested that this limiting of reading comprehension by a lack of focus on listening comprehension is likely to be detrimental to learners of classical languages, too, and regrets the absence of a focus on listening comprehension in Latin teaching in UK universities.¹⁹ That absence has been noted in recent surveys of

¹⁴ On this pedagogical model and its rationale, see further Robson (2010) and Lloyd & Robson (2019).

¹⁵ As Hunt (2023, p. 64) notes, Latin coursebooks characteristically ‘expect students to *work at* a story, rather than *read* it fluently’. The approach outlined here instead seeks to allow students to build towards genuine reading fluency by developing the listening comprehension skills crucial to its development.

¹⁶ As articulated in Hoover & Gough (1990) and discussed by Lloyd (2017, pp. 69-70).

¹⁷ Hoover & Gough (1990, pp. 127-128).

¹⁸ Verhoeven & van Leeuwe (2012, p. 1807).

¹⁹ Lloyd (2016, p. 70).

Greek and Latin instruction in UK Universities: while teachers and students may often read out Latin sentences in class, this is characteristically done as a preamble to translating and decoding Latin rather than making meaning from heard Latin itself (with or without a written text for students to follow).²⁰

5. LISTENING ACTIVITIES FOR BEGINNERS: THE CITY OF ROME

OU tutorials characteristically take place online using *Adobe Connect* (a platform not dissimilar to *Teams* or *Zoom*), with around 20 students in attendance. This section outlines the kind of activity that Mair employs with her students in the early days of the module, when most students are new to Latin. The passage used is taken from the module materials, but while some students may have already studied it themselves outside tutorials, others may not have seen it:

ecce! in pictūrā est Rōma antīqua, ubi Romānī antīquī habitābant. urbs Rōma est in Italiā sita. ōlim Rōma erat urbs parva, sed celeriter urbs crēscēbat, nam Rōmani erant virī bellicōsī et mīlitēs optimī.²¹

The basic set up of the activity is this. The passage is chunked and presented on a series of slides, each of which contains no more than ten words of text. Each slide also contains one or two pictures related to the text, which help to make the input comprehensible.²² On the first pass through the slides, students are invited to guess the meanings of words (though if a word, such as *ecce*, proves impossible to guess, students can simply be told). During this part of the tutorial, Mair can use the onscreen pointer to indicate which words are being discussed. When the text in Figure 2 is being discussed, for example, she points at Rome and then Italy. Since the emphasis is on comprehension rather than grammar, Mair avoids dwelling too much on a form such as *sita* (let alone parsing it): students can normally guess that it means ‘situated’ which is sufficient for them to understand the sentence.



Figure 2: A sample slide showing how segments of the text are presented to students, accompanied by images

²⁰ Lloyd & Robson (2018a; 2018b; 2023).

²¹ An English translation of this passage might read as follows: Look! In the picture is ancient Rome, where the ancient Romans lived. The city of Rome is situated in Italy. Rome was once a small city, but the city quickly grew, for the Romans were warlike men and excellent soldiers.

²² The technique of supporting comprehension with images is used throughout Cambridge School Classics Project's *Cambridge Latin Course* in its 'Model Sentences'. See for example Cambridge School Classics Project (2022, pp. 1-5).

Once the vocabulary in the slides has been explored in this way, Mair goes back to the beginning of the passage and moves forward through her slides again, this time focusing only on the Latin, though the images are still there to aid memory and understanding. She reads with exaggerated expression, making full use of tone of voice, speed of delivery, gestures and facial expressions to scaffold meaning.²³ For example, when saying the city was growing quickly (*sed celeriter urbs crēscēbat*) she speaks quickly, too, and moves her hands close together indicating something tiny before moving quickly to holding her arms wide to show something big. These ancillary clues encourage understanding in a way that is simply not possible with written text, of course. After one pass through with small chunks of text per slide, Mair moves to a slide with the full text and a small collage of all the pictures beside it and reads through one more time, again with exaggerated expression.

At this point, Mair moves on to a new set of activities each of which involves listening to the passage with all the visual clues removed. For this, students are offered a choice of four ways of interacting with the text they will hear:

- Write down the words you hear as a dictation;
- Repeat each phrase out loud saying it with as much expression as you can;
- Listen quietly with your eyes closed and imagine the scenes you hear described; or
- Draw quick cartoons/sketches of what the sentences mean.

Mair then reads out the passage without the text being visible on screen at all, leaving a little time between sentences for students who are writing, repeating or drawing to complete those actions. Experience suggests that this element of choice works well with students, since it allows them to engage in a way that suits them, as actively or passively as they like. The online nature of the tutorial also allows students to undertake their chosen activity privately without the fear of being judged – with microphones and cameras off, if they choose – especially liberating, perhaps, for students wishing to attempt repeating the Latin aloud.

These exercises were inspired by similar activities experienced by Mair while undertaking doctoral research at a Latin-speaking *conventiculum* in the University of Kentucky in Lexington. Reflecting on this experience, she said:

It was a revelation to me how trying to repeat or write down the spoken word in Lexington made me really focus on it and increased my understanding of it. Now when I want to understand a piece of difficult Latin, instead of looking for

²³ Krashen *et al.* (2018) call such extra-linguistic cues ‘Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation’. Relevant here, too, is the Input Processing Theory of VanPatten (1993), who suggests that, when listening, people strongly privilege the construction of meaning over any grammatical analysis of what they hear.

verbs, etc., or analysing it, I read it aloud expressively, or read it silently to myself as expressively as I can several times, and I find that helps me to get the gist of what is going on, or perhaps just the kind of thing that might be being said. So that if I convert the Latin to sound in my head and listen to it, I have a much better chance of it becoming comprehensible. This is what I want for my students too – that they develop understanding of Latin rather than changing Latin to English to understand it.

6. LISTENING ACTIVITIES FOR MORE ADVANCED LEARNERS: ECHO AND NARCISSUS

Listening activities can be used with learners of all levels, with the possibilities growing the more advanced students' knowledge of Latin becomes.²⁴ The following activity was originally used in the context of a small, online Latin speaking group, but as our presentation at the Cambridge conference demonstrated, it can also be used successfully with larger groups.

The text used in this activity is an extract from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and shows, we hope, how a reasonably challenging text can be made comprehensible and enjoyable. The passage in question is Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.377-390, which forms part of the story of Echo and Narcissus. Famously, Echo is unable to say anything herself unless someone else says it first, so her speech in this passage only ever mirrors the (final) words of what Narcissus says. Narcissus has no interest in Echo, but the same cannot be said of the nymph, who is strongly attracted to Narcissus and follows him through the woods where he is wandering, having lost his companions. The Latin text is reproduced below, with the text highlighted whenever Ovid indicates that one of these two characters speaks: Narcissus in blue and Echo in red.

forte puer comitum sēductus ab agmine fīdō
 dīxerat 'ecquis adest?' et 'adest!' responderat Ēchō.
 hic stupet, utque aciem partēs dīmittit in omnēs,
 vōce 'venī!' magnā clāmat; vocat illa vocantem.
 respicit et rūsus nūllō veniente 'quid' inquit
 'mē fugis?' et totidem, quot dīxit, verba recēpit.
 perstat et alternae dēceptus imāgine vōcis,
 'hūc coeāmus!' ait nūllīque libentius umquam
 respōnsūra sonō 'coeāmus' rettulit Ēchō
 et verbīs favet ipsa suīs ēgressaque silvā

²⁴ A number of different kinds of listening activities are based on principles of Comprehensible Input, examples of which are usefully detailed by Hunt (2023, pp. 51-57).

Tbat, ut iniceret spērātō bracchia collō.
 ille fugit fugiēnsque ‘manūs complexibus aufer;
 ante’ ait ‘ēmoriar, quam sit tibi cōpia nostrī.’
 rettulit illa nihil nisi ‘sit tibi cōpia nostrī.’

By filling in a few of the gaps where Ovid does not provide Echo’s words verbatim, the following script was drawn up to create a dialogue. (Note that the black text in parentheses represents the original Latin where the words of Echo are implied rather than spoken.)

Narcissus: ecquis adest?
 Echo: adest!
 Narcissus: venī!
 Echo: venī!
 (vocat illa vocantem)
 Narcissus: quid mē fugis?
 Echo: quid mē fugis?
 (totidem quot dīxit [Narcissus], verba recēpit)
 Narcissus: hūc coeāmus!
 Echo: coeāmus!
 Narcissus: manūs complexibus aufer! ante ēmoriar, quam sit tibi cōpia
 nostrī!
 Echo: sit tibi copia nostri!

This script can be used in various ways, but the method we chose to demonstrate in our presentation involved having two participants deliver the dialogue while a third took the part of Ovid as narrator and read the words in black. It is a good idea to rehearse this briefly in advance, so the actors can perform in as lively and comic a way as possible. In our demonstration, we had three experienced Latinist tutors doing the performance, but this could work equally well with some confident students recruited into the roles and given a little rehearsal time. Before our first performance of the script, Mair told our audience (representing our students) that they were going to participate in the second run through by playing Echo, mirroring Narcissus’ words along with our Echo actor (Mair).

Our first read through was also prefaced with an extemporized introduction in Latin by Mair, setting the playful tone with a view to moving the room into a ‘Latin bubble’ where

participants did not need to switch between languages but could enjoy understanding Latin at conversational speed:²⁵

ego Echo sum et pulcherrima sum, nonne? James est Narcissus et eum valde amo sed me non amat. est quoque pulcherrimus! ... nunc incipiamus. incipe quaeso!

Then, before the second read through, the audience was reminded of their role – once more in Latin:²⁶

iterum carmen recitabimus, sed nunc vos omnes eritis Echo et volo vos vividissime verba recitare. James, incipe iterum quaeso!

As you will see on the video linked to [here](#), following the example of our somewhat hammy actors, our ‘students’ felt liberated to join in with a level of enthusiasm that surprised and delighted us. This liveliness and fun are no doubt things that we would all like to see more of in our classrooms.

We completed the session with a reading of the full passage by our narrator (Christian) while Echo (Mair and audience) and Narcissus (James) read the parts in red and blue, with the fact that the dialogue that was already well understood helping to support, we hope, comprehension of other parts of the poem.

We hope that this exercise demonstrates how we can help more advanced students to practise their listening skills by hearing a performance and repeating some of its content, as well as by listening to instructions and explanations in Latin. Also, by drawing out a dialogue from the text and ensuring comprehension of that, we helped our ‘students’ to move toward being able to tackle the whole piece. Ovid’s account of the Echo and Narcissus story is a particularly suitable piece of Latin to adapt for performance in this way, but there are many other examples of texts with dialogues to be found both in Latin textbooks and in the wider Latin cannon. With imagination and enthusiasm, we can improve our students’ ability to understand spoken and thus written Latin, and do so in ways which encourage active participation by students and, importantly, bring fun and energy into the classroom.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In our two-handed presentation, we looked at two very different ways of engaging with and ‘comprehending’ Latin texts. James first highlighted the interdependence of cultural and linguistic content in the *Classical Latin* module and showed how texts that were ‘incomprehensible’ for students with only basic linguistic skills could nevertheless be accessed by making connections through key words, parallel texts and an understanding of the kind of decisions made by translators. Mair then took a text from

²⁵ A translation might read: ‘I am Echo and I’m extremely beautiful, aren’t I? James is Narcissus and I really love him but he doesn’t love me. He is also really beautiful! ... Now, let’s begin. Begin, please!’

²⁶ A translation might read: ‘We’ll read the poem out again, but now all of you will be Echo and I want you to read out the words in a really lively way. James, begin again, please!’

the OU's *Classical Latin* module and showed how it could be augmented with images, expressive delivery and a choice of activities to help students develop listening and thus reading comprehension skills. We then explored building towards comprehension of a more advanced text, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.377-390, by making parts of it comprehensible through performance and repetition.

Something that the authors particularly value about the pedagogic experiments they each outlined in the presentation is just how different they are. Drawing on a range of theories and developing contrasting ways for our students to engage with Latin texts produces a richness in students' learning experience of which we are proud. To be sure, this eclecticism will inevitably result in students responding better to some learning activities than others; that is to say, not every student will enjoy every method we employ. However, we would argue that providing variety has clear benefits, too: it allows students to find their own preferred ways of studying and engaging with Latin, for example, and broadens learning horizons by taking students out of what they might previously have thought of as their comfort zones (being asked to work with unadapted texts or to comprehend Latin aurally might well seem daunting for a beginner in prospect, after all). Positive feedback and the strong retention and pass rates on this module would suggest that students typically enjoy *Classical Latin*, feel a strong sense of achievement on completing the module and, crucially, become confident and competent Latinists through their studies.²⁷ If our students' study of language and culture can be characterized a game of two halves, then, we are pleased that, for most students at least, it is a game that they ultimately win.

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²⁷ In 2024-25, 86.5 per cent of students initially registering for *Classical Latin* completed the module while 79.4 per cent passed, the second highest pass rate of any OU Arts & Humanities Level 2 module (equivalent to second year in a conventional university). This pass rate is significantly higher than that of the language-only module that *Classical Latin* replaced, *Reading Classical Latin*, which in its final year of presentation (2013-14) had a pass rate of just 58.1 per cent. In the most recent survey (2021-22), student satisfaction was 92.5 per cent (compared to a faculty average that year of 72.3 per cent).

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6. From Classroom to Cambridge: A case study in Comprehensible Input teaching

Helena Walters

ABSTRACT

This talk reports on the progress made at Haileybury College, where Dr. Sam Koon has introduced the teaching of Latin and Greek through the comprehensible input (CI) approach. The session will share a practical case study: the journey of one pupil from their first Latin lessons in Year 7 to a successful application to study Classics at the University of Cambridge. The talk will outline the concrete methods used to adapt CI pedagogy at different stages of the school curriculum, from early language acquisition to preparation for public examinations and university entrance. The session aims to demonstrate not only that CI can increase pupil retention but also that it produces results.

1. CONTEXT

Dr. Sam Koon introduced the teaching of Latin and Greek through the Comprehensible Input (CI) approach to Haileybury College (a co-educational boarding school in Hertfordshire) in 2018, making Haileybury the leading CI department in the country. CI has been a great success for Haileybury: pupils are enjoying the subject more, and more are studying the subject beyond KS3. Classical subjects are also competing successfully against Modern Foreign Languages: the four modern languages offered at Haileybury this year recruited 60 pupils combined against 40 studying classical languages. Finally, pupils who previously would have perceived classical languages as 'too hard' are now willing to study Latin.

Many people new to CI fear that the approach will come at the expense of results in public examinations or that it means pupils cannot read the language well enough to make competitive university applications. This has not been the case at Haileybury: only last year, one pupil taught using Comprehensible Input from Year 7 to Year 13 made a successful application to Cambridge to read Classics.

Below are the key CI teaching methods a Haileybury pupil experiences and how the approach changes as pupils through the school.

2. PRINCIPLES OF CI AT HAILEYBURY

The key principle of CI teaching at Haileybury is that the material read must be both comprehensible and compelling.

- In order for a text to be comprehensible, a pupil needs to be able to recognise 98 per cent of the vocabulary they see. This does not include glossed vocabulary.

- To be compelling, the text needs to be enjoyable, or interesting, or thought-provoking in some way. Often, that means the text is part of a longer narrative, but not always.
- In addition, the department avoids lessons that consist solely of translating ten sentences from English into Latin or from Latin into English, on the grounds that the content of those sentences is not compelling. Translation and prose composition are important skills, but we can develop these skills with compelling texts.

For CI to be successful, pupils must read large amounts of text. At Haileybury, the goal is ‘challenge 250’: that is, pupils should read 250 words of Latin within a 40-minute lesson period. It is worth being clear that this goal is not unique words: repeated uses of the same word, and re-reading texts, all count towards this goal.

3. KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

In Key Stages 3 and 4¹ the curriculum is primarily based on ‘novellas’: short Latin stories retelling favourite myths, such as Ariadna and the Minotaur.² Many of those are from Andrew Olimpi’s *Comprehensible Classics* series, but we have also written our own stories in house, and use the early chapters of Ørberg’s *Familia Romana* in the first weeks of Year 7.³

What these stories have in common is that they are comprehensible and compelling: the word count is sheltered, but the grammar is not (in contrast to courses such as the *Cambridge Latin Course* or John Taylor’s *Latin to GCSE*, where, for example, the different case endings are introduced in individual stages).

By keeping the individual word count low, pupils see the same words again and again. For example, one Year 8⁴ text has 120 unique Latin words, of which 45 are English cognates.

Crucially, there are very few glosses in these texts. The cognitive load created by glosses is just so high: many teachers have had the experience of pupils struggling to work with a gloss list. For learners, using an alphabetised gloss list involves:

1. recognising the indicator that the word is glossed (if one is given at all, as many texts only give the underline or similar indicator on the word’s initial appearance);
2. locating the gloss, tracking across or down the page and often having to use the alphabet to locate the gloss within a longer list;
3. identifying the word they are looking for in the glossed list, reverting the new piece of vocabulary to its nominative or principal parts; and

¹ Key Stage 3 is the first period of secondary school, for pupils aged 11-14; Key Stage 4 is the period of study for GCSE examinations, for pupils aged 15-16.

² See, for example, Ash (2019), Hunt (2022) and Ramsby (2022).

³ Year 7 is the first year of Key Stage 3, when pupils are aged 11.

⁴ Pupils are aged between 12-13 in Year 8.

4. returning to their place in the main text, then recalling what they thought the rest of the sentence was doing and applying the new information.

The cognitive load is too high and can be demoralising for many learners.

So, as a department, we avoid glosses where possible. This is achieved firstly by using or creating texts that shelter vocabulary (limiting the number of unique words). Secondly, we use cognates as far as possible (*rapide* rather than *celeriter*, for example). Thirdly, we use pictures to introduce a word: they find it much easier to understand that *navis* is a ship when it is dual coded (the teacher points to the drawing of the ship every time she says *navis*). Finally, where glosses are unavoidable, we put all glosses in-line with one meaning. This keeps the load on working memory and eye movement to a minimum.

While the grammar is not sheltered (it is not uncommon to see present subjunctives or gerundives in beginner texts), we do use or create texts that support pupils' reading. For example, Key Stage 3 CI texts contain pronouns like *ego* where an authentic text would not use them, or use adverbs like *mox* [soon] or *antea* [before] to flag changes of tense. This means pupils can read the texts freely, and teachers can draw learners' attention to the changes in verb endings after they have already understood the verb's meaning.

4. CI LESSON ACTIVITIES

Firstly, to start the lesson, we often use a pyramid.

The concept of the pyramid is that it begins with a single word or short phrase that lengthens repetitively. Pyramids often introduce new vocabulary by utilising cognates or context to prompt deduction. Alternatively, where a new word is glossed, the pyramid's structure ensures pupils encounter the term repeatedly (perhaps six times) as the lines progressively lengthen (see Figure 1).

The pyramids are also a fantastic tool because they activate pupils' prior learning of longer stories. Finally, they enable teachers to point out grammatical features such as the gender of nouns and the superlative in the example below.



Figure 1: Example of pyramid starters at Key Stage 3

It is rare at Haileybury for pupils to read texts silently and independently, especially at Key Stage 3. Usually, a teacher will read the text aloud in Latin, then go back to the start, put a finger underneath each word and expect the class as a chorus to either reread or translate the text. The confidence and volume of the pupils is a great way to assess if they know the text; it also doubles the word count, because they hear the teacher read the text, then read it again themselves. Pupils also gain greater confidence reading aloud in Latin, because they have heard the teacher pronounce the same words. Easier passages might be read aloud in Latin by the teacher without choral translation, whereas harder passages demand more questioning and prompting.

Within our lessons, there is relatively little written translation of these texts. Partly, this is because the texts are comprehensible, so pupils should not need to write a translation, but rather understand the text as we read together. As teachers, however, we need to assess whether the text is comprehensible by all pupils. There are a number of ways to do this:

- Memory games: either an old-fashioned dictation (reading a text aloud and asking the pupils to write it down after a second or third hearing) or a memory game where various sentences from the text are displayed on the board then removed. Both these methods develop pupils' working memory and build the association of words' spoken and written forms. Asking pupils to translate the sentences into English at the end of the activity allows the teacher to assess comprehension of grammar or vocabulary without pupils spending a long time on extensive written translation.
- 'Listen while you draw': the teacher reads a text aloud in Latin and the pupils draw what they hear. That might be a description of a character or even a short scene or a sequence of scenes from the story.
- The teacher provides statements in Latin summarising the text and asks pupils whether they are true or false. These assess whether or not the pupils have understood the story and can be written by the teacher to focus on new vocabulary. Asking pupils to correct any false statements by rewriting them in Latin means pupils have to engage with the Latin. Teacher corrections of these rewritten statements can prompt changes, such as prompting pupils to put an - m on a noun in the accusative, without spending an entire lesson on grammar.
- Comprehension questions in Latin: at this stage, we explicitly encourage the pupils to find the relevant piece of Latin from the text and copy it down to answer the question. So, the question itself is in Latin (more input), they re-read the text to find the answer (more input), they write down their answer, then they hear the teacher correcting the answers (more input). This activity can be differentiated by grading the questions from easier to harder (e.g. which require

finding and copying a sentence from the text and which demand a change of ending or lateral thinking). When pupils ask for advice on harder questions (e.g. changing a first-person to a third-person ending), the teacher can explain this to them, so pupils are learning about the significance of word endings, but in a drip-fed rather than grammar-first way.

There are other ways to assess comprehension, such as writing summaries in English, answering comprehension questions in English, or getting pupils to create storyboard summaries, but these are less valuable as they do not generally come with the bonus of increasing good quality Latin input from the teacher.

Lessons built from components like these make up the majority of our 'language' teaching both at Key Stages 3 and 4⁵. The differences would be the sheltering of vocabulary (moving from 140 words in a Year 7 novella, to 320 in a Year 11⁶) and the removal of grammatical supports such as pronouns.

5. ALTERNATIVES TO NOVELLAS

Many departments are working on shoe-string budgets, and purchasing two or three novellas for a year's teaching instead of a single textbook just is not possible for everyone. However, there are alternatives. One way is to reuse the Latin from already-purchased textbooks. I did this a few years ago with the narrative texts from Latin to GCSE 1 that tell the story of Aeneas. I extracted the texts, added the activities I mentioned before (memory games, dictation, pyramids) to reinforce vocabulary and adjusted the glosses as needed.

6. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE GRAMMAR?

Many teachers' fear or criticism of CI is that pupils will not understand the grammar. I have already touched on how we introduce grammar in Key Stage 3 lessons, but, of course, there is the component in the GCSE examination where pupils need to answer grammar questions or write in Latin.

At GCSE we start to introduce grammatical terminology more intentionally. Crucially, this still follows their reading i.e. pupils will have encountered a grammatical feature many times in context before we discuss it explicitly. For example, I might in one lesson draw my class's attention to imperfect tense verbs through the *ba* sound. In a subsequent lesson, I would talk more about how we translate these verbs and the difference in meaning between the imperfect and perfect tense verbs in the text. In the next lesson I might then ask them to identify as many verbs as they can in the imperfect tense. That is all that is necessary for success at GCSE grammar questions. Other examiners' favourites, such as prepositions, can be tackled similarly.

⁵ Key Stage 3: pupils aged between 11-14; Key Stage 4: pupils aged 15-16.

⁶ Year 7: pupils aged 11-12; Year 11: pupils aged 15-16.

7. LITERATURE TEACHING

For literature teaching, we use tiered readers. These are wonderful tools that enable us to maintain high word counts in lessons where pupils might only read a few lines of the set text, and give pupils access without leaving them to struggle with A level / post-A level grammar independently or resort entirely to rote learning.

Tiered readers should be combined with some of the methods I use for a ‘language’ lesson to increase word count: for example, a pyramid (using the GCSE vocabulary⁷) to introduce the text’s author. This example also gets pupils practising imperfect tense versus present tense (Figure 2).

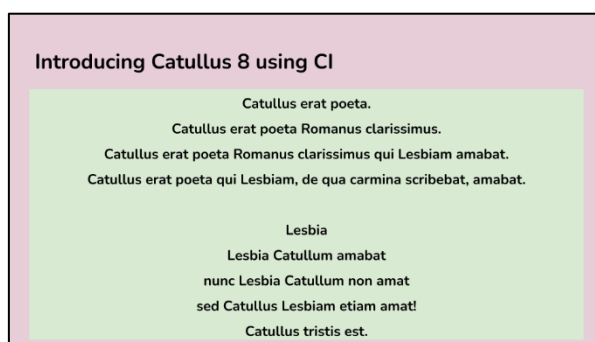


Figure 2: Context pyramid, using GCSE Latin

8. SIXTH FORM

At Haileybury in the Sixth Form,⁸ in some ways, little changes in our approach: we still use many of the methods I have already covered. We often use *Familia Romana* with Lower Sixth pupils, as it is fantastic for vocabulary, especially poetry, and also for encouraging pupils to work out the meaning of words independently from context. We are still aiming for 98 per cent recognition, but where pupils encounter unfamiliar words, especially non-cognates, I want them to first try to establish a word’s meaning independently before asking me as the teacher. The aim is to prepare pupils for A Level language papers, where there is no prescribed vocabulary list, and to enable them to read authentic texts independently.

The other benefit of *Familia Romana* for us, and a difference for our Sixth Form teaching, is the grammar exercises that come at the end of each chapter. We use these exercises (and/or prose composition courses) to formalise pupils’ knowledge of grammar so they feel confident with unseen verse translation.⁹ Prose composition¹⁰ shows that our pupils often have an instinct for what does and does not look right,

⁷ The examination boards provide a list of around 450 words (the ‘Defined Vocabulary List’) which will not be glossed in the GCSE examination.

⁸ Sixth Form is the period when pupils study for A level examinations, aged 17-18.

⁹ ‘Unseen’ translation is sometimes referred to as ‘at sight’ translation, in which the pupil should translate a passage of Latin into English without having seen the passage before.

¹⁰ Prose composition is the translation of English prose sentences or passages into Latin prose.

based on their extensive reading. The exercises give them confidence and get rid of any misunderstandings.

For prescribed literature, we continue with tiered readers in the ways I've outlined above. However, I would also create tiered readers for difficult unseen translations. For example, if I want to get my pupils familiar with Livy's style, but know they cannot yet read an unseen, I would create a tiered reader for it. This then allows me to point out the differences between my 'easier' version and Livy's (for example, historic infinitives).

Finally, Sam Koon has developed a programme of re-reading authentic texts over a sequence of four lessons. Each lesson, we re-read the same text. In the first lesson, the teacher takes the pupils through the text line by line in the traditional way. In the second, the pupils take the teacher through what they remember with support from the teacher. In the third, pupils and teacher re-read the text together in Latin. In the fourth, they re-read the text in Latin quickly. If there is a particular grammatical point pupils struggle with in literature or unseen reading, the teacher can use the exact text as an example. Pupils are able to focus on the grammar, because they already know what the text means. As teachers, we need to trust that authentic Latin will contain the grammar pupils need to know.

Over a year, pupils could read eight to ten authentic texts of about 150–200 words. This gives them lots of confidence and exposes them to different types of Latin, starting with easier – but still interesting – authentic texts such as the *Prologue of John*, moving through to Cicero, and ultimately to poetry. Needless to say, this exposure to different Latin authors is also excellent preparation for university interviews.

9. CONCLUSION

CI at Haileybury has brought success and given our pupils a really enjoyable experience: they read a lot of Latin as independently as possible, they enjoy the texts we read, and they leave us equipped with the ability to read on at the highest levels. If you're debating making the switch, I cannot recommend it highly enough. While it is scary to move away from the structure of traditional courses, teaching with CI lets you share classical languages in an accessible way and brings so much joy to the pupils through their success.

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7. Comprehensible Input as Inclusive Design for Ancient Language Learning

Cressida Ryan

ABSTRACT

Dr. Cressida Ryan is a disability advisor at the University of Oxford, and Supernumerary Fellow at Wolfson College. She has previously been a New Testament Greek Lecturer, and taught Latin and Greek in a range of school and university contexts. Before lecturing, she also spent six years in university outreach. She researches the Early Modern reception of Sophocles, Neo Latin, Theology, language pedagogy, and neurodivergence. She will publish her first monograph in 2027, on the relationship between pedagogy, translation theory, Greek tragedy, and the New Testament, reading Luther's Latin translation of the New Testament in the light of Jerome and Erasmus.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this short paper is to blend areas that are not usually considered together, but which have the potential to lead to more inclusive teaching. I write as a former Classics teacher, who is now a disability advisor with a special interest in neurodivergence. My key question is what it means to create an inclusive pedagogy that does not entail extra workload, but can lead to better pedagogical approaches, with better universal design. The intent is for all students to flourish, and in particular, for disabled students to flourish by design rather than through adjustments. This reduces the need for some degree of specialist input or change, while increasing student agency, dignity, progress, and wellbeing.

I argue that Comprehensible Input (CI) can be used to achieve just such an outcome. I use New Testament Greek as my material, but aim not to presuppose Greek familiarity. The New Testament has some particular quirks which make it uniquely suited to this discussion, but general principles can be extracted for application to other contexts.¹ I blend a reading of the Equality Act 2010 and its requirement for anticipatory adjustments, with an understanding of Universal Design for Learning, and Comprehensible Input as a way to achieve this.²

I start with an overview of CI from my perspective, without over-rehearsing the points already made by others.³ To be comprehensible, as set out by Paul Nation, a reader needs to understand between 95 per cent and 98 per cent of the vocabulary in a text.⁴ The text, for CI purposes, also needs to be compelling. Textbook sentences are frequently decontextualized and abstract, without making sense or carrying meaning

¹ See Ryan (2018, 2024) for more discussion about the specific challenges of teaching New Testament Greek.

² For an overview of Universal Design for Learning, see Levey (2023).

³ See the rest of the papers in this collection, but for some initial applications to ancient language teaching see Rogers (2019) and Patrick (2019).

⁴ Nation (2006).

for students. The New Testament, on the other hand, offers a meaningful story (i.e. the gospels) with real-world impact; its cultural value is significant, and its language rich but accessible. Merkle and Plummer rank the books by complexity of vocabulary and syntax.⁵ With a broad range of difficulty, levels and styles, the New Testament is demonstrably able to offer continuous grades of i+1 (to use Krashen's terminology⁶) that is comprehensible, compelling, rich and abundant. Luke is likely to have been the only 'native' Greek-speaking author of the New Testament (responsible for around 25 per cent of the text). This means that the majority of writers were already functioning in a second language. The New Testament is therefore already, in many ways, a model of second language acquisition in action. The writers are trying to express themselves, however imperfectly, in many of the same kinds of ways that we as teachers might be using the language with our students (particularly if communicative approaches are used).⁷

The New Testament lexicon incorporates roughly 5,500 different items (depending on how they are defined). This is well beyond what most readers will learn, and a 95-98 per cent coverage becomes unfeasible in any normal classroom setting. 1 John, my case study in this talk, is a beautiful mission statement for how to be a Christian. It also uses only 209 different words, which is well below the circa 500 words used in a standard textbook,⁸ or even the 90 per cent coverage list for the New Testament (901 words). The text is exceptionally syllogistic, which reinforces learning by using vocabulary repeatedly, and in ways which constantly define terms. Starting there, you can build up to reading something like Luke (2,222 words).⁹ Students are unlikely to have the time or inclination to learn all 5,500, particularly given that several thousand of those are hapax legomena. Blending the approach of Comprehensible Input, with careful text selection, and some elements of philological and lexical awareness, however, makes reading the New Testament much more realistic. That 901-word list of the 90 per cent most frequent words is learnable. It also takes you to a frequency of 13 times in the text. That amounts to about once every 20 chapters. Most New Testament textbooks would say you should aim for a minimum threshold of frequency of 50 uses, but aim for 30 if you can and, if you're really feeling brave, 10. 13 uses in the text is therefore already at a realistic good standard.

With 901 words, therefore, roughly comparable to an A level list,¹⁰ students are in a position to read the text within a relatively comfortable lexical frame. We can, however, improve on that very easily. CI may not be the sole strategy that supports students, but it can work alongside lexicological and morphological strands to support rapid

⁵ Merkle and Plummer (2017).

⁶ Krashen (1981, 1985, 1987, 1989).

⁷ On communicative approaches to ancient language teaching, see especially Lloyd & Hunt (2020).

⁸ A good example is Duff & Wenham (2008).

⁹ Statistics taken from TLG which uses United Bible Society's third edition of the text (Aland et al., 1975).

¹⁰ A level is the examination taken by students aged 17-18 in English schools. It is taken after roughly five years of learning a subject.

student learning. A good example is the verb ποιῶ (poiō, I make / do). I can teach students that verb. I can then teach them about that verb and related words.

ὁ ποιητής - this has a -τής suffix. It will therefore be a masculine, first declension agent. You now know you have got someone who does something. It is a poet.

τὸ ποιήμα (to poiēma) – this has a -μα suffix. It will therefore be neuter, third declension, the product of a verb. In other words, it is the poem.

ἡ ποιησις (hē poiēsis) – this has a -σις suffix. It will therefore be feminine, third declension, the process of a verb. One returns to Philip Sydney and the art of poesie. Most students will not know *poesie* as an English word, but they can learn it.

This kind of word-building allows a reader to understand huge amounts of New Testament vocabulary without having to learn it in any active sense. Learning one word (the verb ποιῶ) has already opened up three more, and, by repeating the strategy with other stems, that large 5,500 total number of lexical items starts looking less daunting.

We see the productive word-building and instinctive understanding at play in the Gospel of Peter. The usual verb to crucify is σταυρῶ (stauroō). The omicron is part of a contract verb pattern that is factitive, making the contents of the verb happen; this is equivalent of -ify in English. ὁ σταυρός (stauros) is a cross, so σταυρῶ becomes 'cross-ify'. This may not be usual vocabulary, but it is important for the New Testament and related texts. In the Gospel of Peter we find σταυρίσκειν (stauriskein). This is a *hapax legomenon* in Greek, not appearing anywhere else in attested literature. Any reader with a good understanding of how Greek works, however, would understand it. There is the ὁ σταυρός root, with an -σκ- infix that marks a process, and a present active infinitive ending. It denotes making the cross-process happen. The writer might not have been able to remember σταυρῶ, but that does not matter. They created something unique but comprehensible. This successful communication is what we are aiming to teach students to navigate. Using prior knowledge, blending disciplinary approaches, students can quickly learn to work their way through a text without having to look everything up.

What, however, does this have to do with inclusive design or Universal Design for Learning? Inclusive design is an architectural principle wherein buildings are designed to meet multiple needs, reducing the need for specialist adaptation. The standard example is building ramps and stairs together, because then people can use entrances whether finding stairs easy, or needing a ramp for a wheelchair, pram, or luggage trolley etc. Universal Design for Learning applies this principle to education, aiming to ensure that learning is accessible by design rather than adaptation, as far as possible, with multimodal approaches. It requires building accessibility through creativity and multimodality from the start, which is effectively what CI already does.

The Equality Act 2010 requires educators to make anticipatory adjustments, acknowledging that disabled students will be present in any cohort.¹¹ We can predict that there will be neurodivergent people in most classes, given estimates of around 20 per cent of the population as neurodivergent. We can predict that we will, over the course of our teaching, encounter students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, mobility difficulties, or other disabilities and chronic conditions. We can predict and anticipate many needs, and have a legal duty to have done so. This can be reactive, but proactive curriculum and pedagogical design is going to be more successful and sustainable. I want to consider what practical design principles we can engage to ensure it already meets many needs, and adjustments become part of normal practice. This potentially improves teaching and learning in general. It also means less disclosure, fewer bespoke adjustments, and more dignity and progress for students. We can meet our legal duty while also improving education for everyone, which cannot be a bad thing. CI, I suggest, provides the pedagogical mechanism for doing precisely that.

My focus, now therefore, is to consider how the principles of CI can be applied to provide a Universal Design for Learning approach to ancient language teaching that therefore becomes a way to meet the Equality Act's anticipatory duty, with specific reference to neurodivergence.

The term neurodivergence (or neurodiversity) covers a broad range of characteristics, traits, and labels which describe and define ways in which a significant minority of the population's brains work differently to the majority, in specific ways. This includes what is often described as Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, but also conditions such as ADHD and autism. While each has its defining characteristics, or clusters of characteristics, there are many shared traits between the different conditions. One is poor working memory. What then of drills and spaced repetition? Another might be social imagination. When a teacher asks students to imagine a scene, what about those who cannot? When given decontextualised sentences that require inference of the context for understanding (why SHOULD *libera nos a malo* not be about apples?¹²), what if you just can't? We need to think of ways to help students keep things fresh in their mind, and sometimes supply the picture. Would a picture book version of a set text help? Could audio recordings of a text help supply a 'hook' so that a student can engage? Using principles of Comprehensible Input blended with other approaches can bring in the compelling element needed to support students struggling to tune in.

A further potential trait, common in ADHD, is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD). Children with ADHD are likely to receive in the region of 20,000 extra negative messages about themselves by the age of twelve. They are also naturally wired to be

¹¹ Equality Act (2010).

¹² *libera nos a malo* - deliver us from evil (the Lord's prayer), where *malo* is the ablative of the adjective *malus*, used substantively, but is spelled the same as the ablative for apple.

more sensitive to criticism. You may have a student (indeed many students) who are likely to take criticism more harshly, while criticised more than their peers, and then we put them in a high exposure position in class. Research on language classrooms suggests that they need to be higher face than even other classrooms.¹³ We are asking students to make themselves vulnerable when they are learning languages. By definition, therefore, the language classroom also has to be a much higher face-saving classroom than any other form of classroom. Our teaching, therefore, needs to preserve face because we are teaching, because we are teaching languages, and because we are teaching languages to neurodivergent students.

We can build this through some of the lower-stakes or tiered work found in CI. We would immediately be improving our teaching, particularly for those who might be dealing with something like RSD. Including elements of communicative approaches, or total physical response, we could balance support of those with auditory or visual processing problems.¹⁴ We could use multimodal teaching methods to reduce the load on those who find writing hard.

Neurodivergent students may have what appears to be a lower threshold for boredom, that is, a tendency towards novelty-seeking, coupled with difficulties in managing and directing concentration. The emphasis on reading slightly challenging material that is both compelling and copious will help to keep students engaged. They may also have a higher need to understand their learning and the learning process than a neurotypical student. Building academic self-awareness and metacognition is, in all cases, positive for student progress.¹⁵ Understanding how and why Greek words mean certain things is much easier in context. Exploring why ‘father’ and ὁ πατήρ (ho patēr) are not simple equivalents is much easier when they are situated within the framework of a story. Students have a context in which to understand a word, and a meaningful story background to help them remember it.

CI, therefore, offers many elements of what would support neurodivergent students in managing some of the challenges they face in the classroom. I now introduce one way I have tried to build the multimodal approach required for successful Universal Design for Learning into my teaching using principles of CI. I have written workbooks for reading Luke, and the Johannine letters. These involve a range of strategies, including:

- 1.) Skim and summarise a text before translating it.
- 2.) Storyboard a text to reflect the story in general.
- 3.) Compare images of a text to consider how each one represents the text.
- 4.) Position yourself as a film director in a text; consider perspective within a story (e.g. in context does ἐρχομαι (erchomai) mean ‘I come’ or ‘I go’?).
- 5.) Create a short film that shows me elements of your translation approach.

¹³ Tin (2016).

¹⁴ For more on TPR in Classics teaching see Bracey (2019).

¹⁵ I expect to publish the results of a research project conducted into this approach later in 2026.

By building in such creativity, we are also invoking the higher order skills of Bloom's taxonomy. A CI approach may also use tiered versions of text, that is, versions that are written to bridge the gap between a student's current language level and the original text using an i+1 stepwise approach. Students can write their own tiered texts, or work with alternative tiered texts to build new versions. Creativity will enhance everyone's learning. By preparing tiered texts that are only a little taxing, rather than struggling through unadapted texts, student morale is kept higher, and RSD may be better countered. This also leaves more room for dictionary tasks, or translation comparisons, set against understanding vocabulary in context, and different understanding of Greek texts. We can blend philology, translation, and reading into one coherent learning experience. My work with CI does not mean ignoring some of the more traditional approaches, but blending them into a bigger architecture.

A multimodal approach also allows us to support students with auditory or visual processing problems. I have recorded the texts I teach, with each word highlighted as I speak it. Students can listen while reading, or instead of reading, whether in preparation or consolidation. I have also recorded discussions of the text as I annotate them, so students have a short version of a commentary / class discussion to work with. I can see from the analytics what students are listening to and when, and use that to create more similar resources. By managing my resources carefully, I gain the data I need to improve my teaching further.

I have taken Luke in particular as my example for tiering a text, as it is relatively challenging Greek (in New Testament terms). In this passage, there is an unclean spirit coming out of a host person and trying to find somewhere to go, wandering through waterless places. It goes back, finds little room, and then invites a whole host of demons to join.

V1: το ἀκαθαρτον πνευμα ἐξερχεται ἐκ του ἀνθρωπου. διερχεται δια τοπων χωρις ὕδρος. ζητει ἀναπαυσιν. οὐ εὕρισκει ἀναπαυσιν. το πνευμα λεγει 'ἐρχεται προς τον οἶκον μου, ἐξ οὐ ἐξηλθον. το πνευμα ἐρχεται και εὕρισκει τον οἶκον, ὅς ἐστι ἀγαθος. τοτε πορευεται και λαμβανει ἑπτα ἑτερα πονηρα πνευματα. εἰσερχεται εἰς τον οἶκον και οἶκει ἐκει. τα ἑτερα πνευματα ἐστι μαλλον κακα ἢ το πρωτον πνευμα.

V2: ὅτε το ἀκαθαρτον πνευμα ἐξερχεται ἐκ του ἀνθρωπου, διερχεται δι' ἀνυδρων τοπων ζητουν ἀναπαυσιν και μη εὕρισκον. λεγει 'ὑποστρεψω εἰς τον οἶκον μου, ὅθεν ἐξηλθον. Ἐλθεν και εὕρισκει τον οἶκον σεσαρωμενον και κεκοσμημενον. τοτε πορευεται και παραλαμβάνει ἑπτα ἑτερα πονηρα πνευματα, και εἰσερχεται και κατοικει ἐκει. τα ἄλλα πνευματα του ἀνθρωπου ἐστι μαλλον κακα ἢ το πρωτον.

'Original': 24 Ὅταν τὸ ἀκάθαρτον πνεῦμα ἐξέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, διέρχεται δι' ἀνύδρων τόπων ζητοῦν ἀνάπαυσιν καὶ μὴ εὕρισκον· [τότε] λέγει, Ὑποστρέψω εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου ὅθεν ἐξηλθον 25 καὶ ἐλθὼν εὕρισκει σεσαρωμένον καὶ κεκοσμημένον. 26 τότε πορεύεται καὶ παραλαμβάνει ἕτερα πνεύματα πονηρότερα ἑαυτοῦ ἑπτὰ καὶ

εἰσελθόντα κατοικεῖ ἐκεῖ καὶ γίνεται τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκείνου χείρονα τῶν πρώτων.

A basic translation (by the author): Whenever an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it goes through waterless places looking for somewhere to rest, and fails to find one. Then it says 'I will return to my house, to where I came from'. When it returns, it finds it swept out and organised. Then it goes and brings over seven other spirits more wicked than it. Once they've arrived, they live there. And so, we find that the final state of that man is worse than the former one.

In adapting it, I have made changes such as:

- a.) Writing in a more natural English word order.
- b.) Adding in names for pronouns.
- c.) Removing most accents as visual noise in the first instance.
- d.) Replacing unfamiliar vocab with more familiar words where possible.
- e.) Making clauses paratactic rather than syntactic.

The phrases are short, the text fairly easy to read. It does take a lot of work, but once done, can be reused. The work large balances out with more traditional teaching preparation, but is perhaps more front-loaded, creating resources ahead of time. The time investment is repaid in the teaching gains. I've given them a very basic version, a midway version, and then Luke's text. They therefore read the story three times, which builds in spaced repetition in a meaningful context. Many neurodivergent students will struggle with spaced repetition, given problems with time management, concentration, executive function, working memory etc. Pushing a methodology that alienates such students may leave them disillusioned, whereas building it into meaningful teaching practice helps to draw them in.

I ask students to read the tiered text, and perhaps engage in some of the activities, as their preparation for class. I set time limits rather than line limits. Students are no longer faced with the big jump from textbook to text, or with unadapted text on their own. Their anxiety levels are lower, and their rejection responses less strident, as they become more comfortable with the idea that the challenge is not beyond them, and they will be accepted wherever they have got to with it. Class trust needs to be high, but this brings us back to what we already know about language class dynamics and the need for high face-saving environments. This approach leads to a coaching style of language teaching, which is also in line with current research trends. It encourages flexibility of thinking as we compare the different versions of the text. It prioritises reading and understanding over translating, which is particularly important when it comes to the New Testament, when so much has historically been at stake in translating it.

Returning finally to this sense of the New Testament as different, I do think that it provides a unique and powerful teaching resource. I was once called a heretic by a student, for explaining a textual variant for Jesus as Son of Man / God. The impact of

textual criticism was given powerful weight, and the class were able to have a deep discussion about scholarship and faith. It reminded me, again, how teaching has a real-world impact. Taking a multimodal approach (Universal Design for Learning) with a CI strategy builds plurality and creativity into teaching, challenging students to become independent critical thinkers. Reading text, particularly a text like the New Testament, is not decontextualised, arbitrary, meaningless sentences. It is a form of communication, which is a human process affecting who and how people are. Thinking about the weight of this aspect forces an ethics of pedagogy that can be overlooked elsewhere.

In conclusion, therefore, I am suggesting that an approach based on CI can be used within a framework of multimodal approaches to offer an inherently inclusive teaching and learning environment. CI is not the sole teaching strategy that will work for all students in all contexts. It is, however, a powerful way to draw students into meaningful reading. The New Testament is such an important text that in experimenting with a CI approach to teaching, it bears very particular fruit, showing up the intellectual, pedagogical, ethical, and even spiritual impact of any new methodology. Experimenting carefully here has shown me that we can meet the Equality Act's anticipatory duty, and genuinely improve education for neurodivergent students, without a significant overall impact on teaching workloads.

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8. Ancient Greek: A new approach to Classical methods

Eugenia Manolidou

ABSTRACT

This paper re-examines the role of Ancient Greek in primary education and proposes a five-part framework integrating Literacy, Orality, Grammar, Ongoing connection, and Storytelling (LOGOS) as a model for renewing classical language pedagogy. Drawing on cognitive neuroscience and applied linguistics, it situates this approach within the contemporary crisis of literacy and attention, intensified by the rise of artificial intelligence. Evidence from longitudinal implementation at *Elliniki Agogi School of Ancient Greek* demonstrates that an experiential, affect-based model can achieve high learner retention (>80 per cent), substantial comprehension gains ($\approx 60 - 86$ per cent), and lasting lexical recall, while enhancing metalinguistic awareness and reflective thought. Adaptable tools illustrate how Greek can be taught as living meaning across linguistic contexts. The paper concludes that early Ancient Greek education remains uniquely relevant: it strengthens literacy, empathy, and interpretive judgment, precisely the human capacities most essential in an AI-driven world.

INTRODUCTION

The place of Ancient Greek within contemporary education has become increasingly uncertain, particularly at the primary level, where curricular pressures and changing literacy habits have reduced its presence. At the same time, international evidence points to a broader decline in reading engagement, attention and deep comprehension, raising questions about how linguistic education can respond to these shifts.

This paper addresses that question by proposing a pedagogical framework for the early teaching of Ancient Greek based on experiential and meaning-centred learning. Drawing on insights from cognitive science and second language acquisition, it introduces the LOGOS model - Literacy, Orality, Grammar, Ongoing Connection and Storytelling - as a structured approach to integrating linguistic, cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

The discussion is grounded in longitudinal observations from the *Elliniki Agogi* programme, an extracurricular educational initiative based in Greece dedicated to the teaching of Ancient Greek through experiential methods since 1994, examining how this framework supports retention, comprehension and metalinguistic awareness in primary students. The aim is to demonstrate that Ancient Greek, when taught as any other language through contextualised use and interpretive engagement, can contribute directly to the development of literacy and interpretive competence in contemporary educational contexts.

SECTION 1: THE EDUCATIONAL QUESTION: WHY BEGIN ANCIENT GREEK EARLY?

International evidence indicates a sustained decline in reading engagement and proficiency across multiple educational contexts.⁷⁶ This development has been widely noted in discussions of contemporary education, where reduced time spent in sustained reading is associated with weaker comprehension and limited depth of processing. As a result, key cognitive functions supported by reading - such as inference, syntactic awareness and critical interpretation - are affected, with implications for how students engage with language and meaning.

Research in cognitive neuroscience emphasizes that literacy depends on sustained, focused engagement; when such habits decline, so do higher-order interpretive skills.⁷⁷

1.1 COGNITIVE AND LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS

Reading is a learned neural network that develops through repeated association between sound and symbol⁷⁸. The Greek alphabet, with its regular sound - symbol correspondence, provides a transparent system for early decoding and supports the development of phonological awareness and memory. Research on bilingualism further suggests that engagement with multiple orthographic systems enhances executive control and metalinguistic awareness⁷⁹. In practical terms, this means that students are learning new words, but also becoming more aware of how language itself works.

Systematic instruction in morphology has been shown to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension.⁸⁰ Because a large proportion of scientific and abstract English derives from Ancient Greek, students encounter immediate relevance by linking new knowledge to familiar lexical patterns. For students, this often appears as a moment of recognition: a word they already know suddenly becomes understandable at a deeper level. Ancient Greek thus functions not only as a tool for understanding how meaning is constructed rather than just a subject of study.

1.2 EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Wolf characterizes contemporary reading practices as increasingly oriented towards speed rather than depth, with implications for inference and reflection⁸¹. The study of Ancient Greek

⁷⁶ OECD (2024); PIRLS (2021).

⁷⁷ Dehaene (2009); Wolf (2018).

⁷⁸ Dehaene (2009, pp. 61-82).

⁷⁹ Bialystok *et al.* (2012).

⁸⁰ Bowers & Kirby (2010).

⁸¹ Wolf (2018).

offers a counterbalance: its inflected structure requires careful parsing and its syntax demands sustained attention to sequence and hierarchy.

At the same developmental stage, children begin to construct conceptual and ethical categories. Introducing terms such as *aretē*, *dikaiosynē* and *logos* provides linguistic anchors for ideas already encountered in narrative and social contexts. As Hunt observes, early exposure to classical languages invites students to treat language itself as an object of inquiry in its own right.⁸²

1.3 AFFECTIVE AND MOTIVATIONAL DIMENSIONS

Krashen's affective-filter hypothesis remains central to language acquisition: emotional engagement reduces anxiety and facilitates the transformation of input into intake⁸³. Primary school students respond particularly well to rhythm, repetition and narrative, modes that correspond to the oral foundations of Ancient Greek.

The teacher's role is therefore to structure input in ways that support comprehension while maintaining meaningful engagement. Observations from *Elliniki Agogi* indicate that affective involvement precedes retention: students who encounter language through gesture, performance and narrative demonstrate long-term recall of vocabulary and structures. In both Greek-speaking and non-Greek-speaking contexts, comprehension emerges through meaningful association, supported by structured, play-based interaction.

1.4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The rationale for early Ancient Greek may be summarized as follows: early symbolic learning supports literacy development and cognitive flexibility;⁸⁴ morphological transparency enhances vocabulary growth across languages;⁸⁵ structured linguistic systems cultivate attention and analytical reasoning;⁸⁶ and emotional engagement contributes to long-term retention.⁸⁷

These outcomes can be achieved without increasing curricular burden. Short interdisciplinary units - linking *mythos* with literature, *astron* with science or *mousikē* with art - situate Greek within the learner's experiential world. The aim is not fluency but sustained familiarity, providing a cognitive and emotional foundation for later study.

INTRODUCTION TO LOGOS

⁸² Hunt (2023, p. 27).

⁸³ Krashen (1982).

⁸⁴ Dehaene (2009).

⁸⁵ Bowers & Kirby (2010).

⁸⁶ Wolf (2018).

⁸⁷ Krashen (1982); Immordino-Yang & Damasio (2007).

The preceding discussion identifies a set of interrelated conditions necessary for effective early language acquisition: sustained literacy development, oral engagement, structural awareness, continuity of meaning and emotional investment through narrative. Rather than functioning as separate variables, these elements operate as a unified pedagogical system.

This paper conceptualises that system as the **LOGOS framework**, a structured model for the teaching of Ancient Greek in primary education. The term *logos* is used both in its classical semantic sense and as an acronym designating five interdependent components:

- L Literacy:** the development of metalinguistic awareness and morphological understanding
- O Orality:** the prioritization of listening and speaking as primary modes of acquisition
- G Grammar:** the internalization of structure through meaningful use rather than abstract rule
- O Ongoing Connection:** the linking of language with cultural, cognitive and personal relevance
- S Storytelling:** the use of narrative as the primary vehicle for comprehension and retention

The LOGOS framework integrates linguistic, cognitive and affective dimensions of learning into a single operational model. Its central premise is that language acquisition in early education is most effective when form, meaning and emotional engagement are introduced simultaneously rather than sequentially.

As both a descriptive and pedagogical construct, LOGOS serves two functions: it identifies the conditions under which durable language acquisition occurs and it provides a practical structure for curriculum design and classroom implementation. The following section examines how this framework is realized in practice through the teaching programmes of *Elliniki Agogi*.

SECTION 2: THE PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK: PRINCIPLES FROM *ELLINIKI AGOGI*

The LOGOS framework finds its practical expression in the programmes developed at *Elliniki Agogi*, an educational institution founded in 1994 and directed since 2017 by the present author. The school serves students aged five to sixteen, primarily native speakers of Modern Greek, whose linguistic proximity to Ancient Greek facilitates early recognition of lexical and morphological patterns. While this context is specific, the underlying pedagogical mechanisms - multimodal input, narrative-based learning and affective engagement - are transferable across linguistic environments.

2.1 CORE PRINCIPLES

The implementation of LOGOS rests on three complementary principles: experiential learning, embodied cognition and affective engagement.

Experiential learning emphasizes the construction of knowledge through action and reflection.⁸⁸ In practice, this is realized through structured activities such as role-play, dramatization and interaction with visual or material artefacts. Linguistic forms are introduced within meaningful situations and subsequently reinforced through repetition and reflection. In classroom terms, students do not first learn rules and then apply them; they encounter language in use and gradually recognize its patterns.

Embodied cognition further supports this approach, positing that comprehension is grounded in sensorimotor experience, with meaning shaped through physical interaction.⁸⁹ The use of gesture and movement - particularly in relation to verbs - provides physical anchors for meaning and facilitates recall.⁹⁰ For example, when a child associates a verb with a physical action, the movement itself becomes part of memory.

Affective engagement, central to Krashen's model of acquisition,⁹¹ determines whether input becomes intake. Instruction is therefore designed to maintain low anxiety and sustained attention through narrative, humour and aesthetic experience. This is a necessary condition: without engagement, even well-structured input is unlikely to be retained.

2.2 CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

Classroom practice follows a consistent sequence that reflects the LOGOS framework.

Lessons begin with short oral routines conducted in Ancient Greek, reinforcing continuity and supporting orality. New material is introduced through brief narratives, supported by visual cues and gesture, ensuring that comprehension precedes analysis. Repetition occurs through guided interaction, including choral response and structured questioning.

Students then engage in performative activities - such as dramatization or dialogue extension - through which linguistic forms are reused in varied contexts. Writing is introduced only after comprehension is established, in line with principles of delayed output.⁹²

Assessment prioritizes comprehension and participation, with less emphasis on formal accuracy. Tasks include picture-matching, sequencing and short listening activities designed to measure recognition of vocabulary and structure. These practices align with findings from communicative language teaching, which indicate that comprehension-based approaches support more durable acquisition than rule-based instruction.⁹³

⁸⁸ Kolb (1984).

⁸⁹ Barsalou (2008); Glenberg (2010).

⁹⁰ Glenberg & Kaschak (2002).

⁹¹ Krashen (1982; 1985).

⁹² Krashen (1982).

⁹³ Lightbown & Spada (2013).

2.3 ALIGNMENT WITH THE LOGOS FRAMEWORK

Each component of classroom practice corresponds directly to the LOGOS model:

- **Literacy** develops through reflection on roots and morphological patterns once oral familiarity is established
- **Orality** is prioritized through continuous exposure to spoken language
- **Grammar** emerges inductively through patterned input, with explicit instruction introduced at a later stage.
- **Ongoing connection** is maintained by linking new linguistic material to students' existing experiences and knowledge. Vocabulary and structures are introduced through contexts that students can recognize and relate to, allowing language to be integrated into their everyday conceptual framework.
- **Storytelling** provides the primary structure within which vocabulary and meaning are embedded

This alignment ensures the simultaneous operation of linguistic, cognitive and affective dimensions, instead of a sequential progression.

2.4 OBSERVED OUTCOMES

Longitudinal observation of primary cohorts (2017 - 2025) indicates consistent gains across multiple domains. Retention rates between academic years exceed 80 per cent, while participation in oral activities increases progressively. Informal comprehension assessments show improvement from approximately 60 per cent to 86 per cent over the course of a single academic year.

Recognition of lexical derivatives also increases, indicating the development of morphological awareness. Qualitative data from teachers and parents further suggest improvements in attention, memory and engagement with language.

These findings align with research on comprehensible input⁹⁴ and on the cognitive benefits of metalinguistic awareness,⁹⁵ supporting the effectiveness of an experiential and meaning-centred approach.

2.5 TRANSFERABILITY

Although the linguistic continuity between Ancient and Modern Greek facilitates acquisition in this context, the underlying mechanisms are not language-specific. Narrative-based input, multimodal reinforcement and affective engagement correspond to general principles of language learning and can be adapted to non-Greek-speaking environments.

⁹⁴ Benati & Schwieter (2017).

⁹⁵ Dehaene (2009); Wolf (2018).

In such contexts, adaptation may involve increased reliance on visual scaffolding, etymological connections and bilingual support. The essential principle remains unchanged: acquisition is driven by meaningful and emotionally engaged interaction with language.

SECTION 3: MEANING, EMOTION AND STORYTELLING

Narrative constitutes the central mechanism through which the LOGOS framework integrates cognition and affect. Story engages attention, supports memory and provides a structure within which linguistic forms acquire meaning. In contrast to abstract instruction, narrative situates language within context, enabling comprehension to emerge through association and reducing reliance on translation.

At *Elliniki Agogi*, myth and fable function as primary vehicles of instruction. Among the first texts introduced are Aesopic fables, presented orally through gesture, dialogue and short performative sequences. Students adopt roles and reproduce simplified linguistic patterns within a controlled vocabulary. The simplicity of these narratives allows for full comprehension, while their moral dimension invites reflection and discussion. This process illustrates what Bruner describes as the narrative construction of meaning: language is not acquired as isolated structure but as part of a coherent interpretive framework.⁹⁶ Through guided interaction, students connect narrative content to familiar situations, transforming linguistic input into cognitive and ethical engagement.

Multimodal reinforcement further strengthens this process. Activities such as drawing, rhythmic recitation and basic musical performance extend comprehension across sensory channels. Research in cognitive psychology indicates that multimodal encoding enhances retention by linking visual, auditory and motor pathways.⁹⁷ Within this framework, language is first experienced and then analysed.

Narrative-based learning also establishes continuity between early exposure and later literary study. Students who encounter Greek through performance and storytelling develop a framework of meaning that supports subsequent engagement with written texts. In contrast, when classical material is introduced solely through translation, comprehension may be achieved but affective engagement remains limited. From a cognitive perspective, this progression reflects the relationship between episodic and semantic memory.⁹⁸ Experiences encoded through narrative and action are later reactivated as structured knowledge. Early exposure through storytelling therefore functions as a foundation for later analytical understanding.

⁹⁶ Bruner (1991).

⁹⁷ Paivio (1990); Mayer (2009).

⁹⁸ Tulving (2002).

In this sense, narrative serves as a central pedagogical mechanism, integrating language, memory and interpretation so that linguistic forms are retained as elements of meaningful engagement.

SECTION 4: RELEVANCE AND REFLECTION

The integration of interpretation and language is particularly evident in the use of early classical texts. Among these, Homer offers a productive entry point due to the narrative clarity and thematic accessibility of selected passages.

At the upper-primary and lower-secondary levels, short excerpts from the *Odyssey* are introduced through guided performance and discussion. A representative example is the opening exchange between Zeus and Athena (*Odyssey* 1.32 - 34), in which responsibility and human agency are foregrounded. The passage is first approached as dialogue: students read or enact the roles, using voice and gesture to establish comprehension.

Interpretation follows comprehension. Students are invited to consider the central question raised by the passage - why individuals attribute responsibility externally rather than to their own actions - and to relate it to familiar experiences. This stage emphasizes reflection and encourages students to engage with the text as a framework for reasoning. Through guided discussion, connections are established between the narrative and everyday experiences, allowing students to recognise the continued relevance of the text and to engage with it as part of a broader human context.

Only after meaning is established does attention shift to linguistic form. Grammatical features - tenses, participial structure or emphasis - are examined as functional elements within the passage. This sequencing reflects established findings in second language acquisition: form is most effectively processed when meaning is already understood.⁹⁹ The same approach applies across genres, with historical and philosophical texts introduced as extensions of a shared interpretive process, ensuring accessibility through structured engagement.

From a pedagogical perspective, this sequence illustrates the integration of comprehension, reflection and analysis. Language functions as a medium of interpretation, and grammatical awareness emerges from use, developing progressively through engagement.

This model corresponds to broader principles of cognitive learning. When linguistic input is embedded in meaningful context, students are more likely to retain both structure and content. Narrative and dialogue thus provide the conditions under which language becomes both intelligible and relevant.

⁹⁹ VanPatten (2017); Lightbown & Spada (2013).

SECTION 5: APPLICATION: TEACHING TOOLS FOR PRIMARY-LEVEL ANCIENT GREEK

The LOGOS framework is operationalised through a set of structured teaching practices designed to support early-stage language acquisition within realistic curricular constraints. At the primary level, the attainable objective corresponds broadly to A1 competence as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2020): recognition of a limited but functional lexicon, comprehension of basic syntactic patterns and the ability to respond to simple prompts.

Instruction is organized around a controlled progression of input and practice, governed by four principles consistent with both LOGOS and established findings in second language acquisition.

1. Controlled lexical input

Each instructional unit introduces a limited number of high-frequency lexical items selected for recurrence, morphological transparency and conceptual relevance. Vocabulary is recycled across narratives and activities, ensuring repeated exposure within meaningful contexts.

For example, a short lesson may centre on a small set of verbs such as *βαίνω*, *λέγω* and *πράττω*, which are introduced within a simple narrative and then reused through questions, gestures and short dialogues.

This approach reflects research indicating that frequency and contextual repetition are central to vocabulary acquisition.¹⁰⁰

2. Comprehensible input through narrative

New linguistic forms are introduced within short narrative contexts, supported by visual cues and gesture. Meaning is established prior to analysis, allowing students to infer structure through use, with explicit explanation introduced at a later stage.

In practice, a short story is first presented orally, accompanied by images or movement. Students respond to simple prompts (e.g. τί πράττει; τί βλέπει; τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο;), demonstrating comprehension before any grammatical terminology is introduced.

This sequencing aligns with the principles of comprehensible input and with evidence that form is processed more effectively when embedded in meaningful communication.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Nation (2013).

¹⁰¹ Krashen (1982).

3. Oral - aural primacy

Listening and speaking precede reading and writing. Activities emphasize repetition, interaction and physical response, which ensures that comprehension is established before written representation is introduced.

A typical sequence includes choral repetition, short exchanges between teacher and students, and simple role-play, through which students reuse language in a controlled but active form.

This approach corresponds to models of input-based instruction and to Total Physical Response techniques, which support early-stage acquisition through multimodal engagement.¹⁰²

4. Multimodal reinforcement

Instruction integrates visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements, including image-based prompts, rhythmic repetition and simple performative tasks. For instance, vocabulary may be reinforced through drawing, gesture or short rhythmic patterns, allowing students to associate linguistic forms with visual and physical cues. Cognitive research indicates that multimodal encoding strengthens retention by activating multiple associative pathways.¹⁰³

Within this structure, teaching materials function as vehicles for learning. Illustrated texts, dialogues and short narrative sequences provide the input through which students encounter and reuse language. As a result, the emphasis remains on controlled exposure, meaningful repetition and gradual expansion of linguistic competence.

Empirical observations from programme implementation (2017 - 2024) indicate that, within approximately one year of weekly instruction, students are able to recognize a core vocabulary, identify basic morphological patterns and respond to simple oral prompts. These outcomes are consistent with early-stage acquisition targets and support the viability of introducing Ancient Greek within primary education.

Since the pedagogical objective at this stage is not fluency but stability, when students develop a secure and meaningful initial relationship with the language, they acquire a cognitive and affective framework that supports further study. In this sense, early instruction establishes and secures continuity.

SECTION 6: EVIDENCE AND RESULTS

The preceding sections have outlined the theoretical and pedagogical basis of the LOGOS framework. This section examines its observed outcomes within primary-level instruction at *Elliniki Agogi* between 2017 and 2025. Although the data derive from programme-based

¹⁰² Asher (1969).

¹⁰³ Paivio (1990); Mayer (2009).

observation and not from controlled experimental design, they provide indicative evidence of patterns in early-stage language acquisition.

6.1 ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

Participation and continuation rates remain consistently high across cohorts. More than 80 per cent of pupils enrolled in introductory courses continue to subsequent levels, a figure that contrasts with reported attrition rates in extracurricular language programmes, which often exceed 40 per cent after the first year.¹⁰⁴

Classroom observation indicates sustained engagement during instructional activities, particularly in oral and performative tasks, suggesting that students remain actively involved throughout the lesson, which supports continuity of attention and participation.

6.2 COMPREHENSION AND LEXICAL DEVELOPMENT

Comprehension is assessed through periodic tasks such as picture-matching, sequencing and short listening exercises drawn from classroom narratives. Mean accuracy increases from approximately 60 per cent at mid-year to 86 per cent by the end of the academic cycle (sample $n = 168$). In practical terms, this indicates that students move from partial recognition to consistent understanding within a relatively short period of instruction.

Delayed recall measures indicate retention of approximately 70 per cent of high-frequency vocabulary items after a three-month interval. The key outcome concerns not only immediate performance, but also the durability of learning over time.

In addition, students demonstrate increasing recognition of morphological patterns and lexical derivatives, which supports the development of metalinguistic awareness. For example, students begin to identify relationships between familiar words and their Greek roots, identify patterns across contexts and understand vocabulary as part of a structured system.

6.3 TRANSFER EFFECTS

Qualitative data from teachers and parents indicate secondary effects on broader cognitive and linguistic skills. These include increased attention during extended tasks, greater awareness of word formation and enhanced engagement with both Modern Greek and English vocabulary.

Such observations are consistent with research on bilingualism and dual-language exposure, which has been associated with gains in executive control and metalinguistic

¹⁰⁴ European Commission (2020, p. 58).

awareness.¹⁰⁵ These findings remain indicative and suggest that early engagement with structured language systems may contribute to wider cognitive development.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, these results indicate that an experiential and meaning-centred approach can support measurable gains in comprehension, retention and participation within limited instructional time. Weekly exposure of 90 minutes, delivered within an extracurricular setting, is sufficient to produce stable vocabulary acquisition and sustained learner engagement.

The findings also support a central premise of the LOGOS framework: affective engagement and structured input function as mutually reinforcing conditions of acquisition. When linguistic forms are embedded in meaningful and emotionally relevant contexts, both retention and motivation increase.

Further research, particularly through controlled comparative studies in non-Greek-speaking contexts, would be required to assess the generalizability of these outcomes. The present data provide initial evidence for the viability of early Ancient Greek instruction within contemporary educational settings.

SECTION 7: ADAPTING THE METHOD BEYOND GREECE

The pedagogical model developed at *Elliniki Agogi* can be adapted to non - Greek - speaking contexts because its underlying principles are not dependent on linguistic continuity but on general mechanisms of language acquisition. These include meaningful input, multimodal reinforcement and affective engagement, all of which are widely supported in research on second language learning.

7.1 MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND ETYMOLOGY

In non-Greek-speaking contexts, etymology offers a natural point of entry. Many modern languages, particularly English, contain a substantial number of words derived from Greek. Working with roots, prefixes and word families allows students to recognize connections between Ancient Greek and familiar vocabulary.

Research indicates that morphological awareness contributes significantly to vocabulary development and reading comprehension.¹⁰⁶ When students identify relationships between forms such as *telephone*, *philosophy* or *democracy* and their Greek origins, language study shifts from memorization to pattern recognition.

¹⁰⁵ Bialystok *et al.* (2012).

¹⁰⁶ Bowers & Kirby (2010); Nagy *et al.* (2006).

From a cognitive perspective, this process corresponds to the formation of associative networks, in which new information is integrated with existing knowledge¹⁰⁷ resulting in increased retention and a stronger sense of relevance.

7.2 MULTIMODAL INPUT AND COMPREHENSION

Visual and auditory scaffolding play a central role in supporting comprehension in the absence of linguistic proximity. Image-based input, gesture and short narrative sequences allow students to infer meaning without reliance on translation.

This approach aligns with principles of comprehensible input and with research on multimodal learning, which demonstrates that information encoded through multiple channels is more effectively retained.¹⁰⁸ In early stages, such techniques reduce cognitive load and facilitate engagement.

7.3 NARRATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE LEARNING

Narrative remains the primary structure through which language is introduced and consolidated. Short dialogues, dramatized scenes and simplified texts create contexts in which students reuse linguistic forms in meaningful ways. Repetition occurs within variation, as the same vocabulary and structures reappear across different situations, thus allowing understanding to deepen gradually.

Through performance and interaction, language becomes an active process embedded in use. Students engage with it through speaking, moving and responding, which supports both comprehension and recall and this way, linguistic forms are encountered as part of a coherent experience that connects meaning, memory and use over time.

7.4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Across contexts, the essential principle remains consistent: acquisition depends on the integration of meaning, structure and engagement. In non-Greek-speaking environments, this requires increased use of visual support, controlled vocabulary and explicit connections to familiar linguistic forms. In practice, this may include the use of images, gesture and short structured exchanges that allow students to respond to language before analysing it, as well as activities that link new vocabulary to words already known in their own language.

The purpose of this process is to support access to texts. When students encounter Ancient Greek as meaningful and accessible, they are able to engage with short passages and simple narratives with increasing confidence. Interaction with language therefore functions as preparation for reading, allowing students to recognise patterns, follow structure and understand meaning within the text. Over time, this leads to more stable forms of

¹⁰⁷ Dehaene (2009).

¹⁰⁸ Paivio (1990); Mayer (2009).

comprehension, as students move from guided recognition to independent understanding of short texts, supported by repeated exposure and structured engagement.

SECTION 8: ADDRESSING PEDAGOGICAL CONCERNS

The introduction of experiential and meaning-centred approaches to Ancient Greek instruction often raises questions regarding the status of the language, the role of enjoyment in learning and the place of explicit grammar. These concerns reflect established pedagogical debates and can be addressed within a framework consistent with research in second language acquisition.

8.1 THE STATUS OF ANCIENT GREEK

Ancient Greek is frequently described as a ‘dead language’, a term typically used to indicate that it is no longer spoken as a primary means of communication. In pedagogical contexts, however, this characterization can obscure the distinction between language as historical object and language as a system of meaning accessible through use.

From an instructional perspective, the question is not whether Ancient Greek is spoken in contemporary society, but how it is approached in the classroom. When students engage with the language through listening, speaking and interpretation, it functions as an active medium of comprehension rather than as a purely analytical code. In this sense, the effectiveness of instruction depends less on the status of the language itself than on the methods through which it is taught.

8.2 ENGAGEMENT AND RIGOUR

A second concern relates to the role of narrative, performance and enjoyment in language learning. These elements are sometimes perceived as incompatible with academic rigour. Research in second language acquisition, however, indicates that engagement supports sustained attention and effective processing of input.

Within a structured framework, activities such as storytelling and dramatization serve as vehicles for repeated exposure to controlled linguistic forms. For example, a short Aesopic fable may be introduced through guided performance, in which students repeat key phrases, respond to simple questions and reenact the sequence of events. The same vocabulary then reappears across subsequent activities, allowing forms to be reinforced through variation.

Similarly, short dialogues based on familiar contexts enable students to reuse a limited set of structures through question-and-answer exchanges, choral response and simple role-play, so that linguistic patterns gradually become stable through repeated and meaningful use. This combination of repetition and sustained attention supports both comprehension and retention, with engagement and rigour functioning as complementary dimensions of the same pedagogical process.

8.3 THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR

A further concern is that an emphasis on comprehension and use may delay or reduce the development of grammatical accuracy. Research suggests, however, that the sequencing of instruction is critical. Students process form more effectively when it is encountered within meaningful input.

In practice, this sequencing is reflected in the way grammatical features are introduced. For example, verb forms such as *ᾶδει* or *πράττει* first appear within short narratives and classroom exchanges, where students respond to questions and reuse the forms in context. Only after repeated exposure does attention shift to pattern recognition, with students identifying endings and functions across familiar examples.

A similar process applies to nominal forms, where case usage becomes apparent through recurring phrases in structured dialogue. Students begin to recognize patterns through use and subsequently articulate them with increasing clarity. In this way, grammatical awareness develops progressively through engagement with language in context, supported by repeated exposure and guided attention to form.

These concerns highlight important aspects of language pedagogy but do not constitute contradictions within an experiential framework. When instruction integrates structured input, meaningful engagement and appropriately sequenced analysis, it is possible to maintain both accessibility and academic rigour.

SECTION 9: TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The increasing use of artificial intelligence in educational contexts raises questions about the nature and purpose of language learning. AI systems are now capable of performing tasks traditionally associated with language instruction, including translation, grammatical analysis and text generation and as a result, the focus of education is shifted from the acquisition of information to the development of interpretive and evaluative skills.

Within this context, the teaching of Ancient Greek offers a framework for cultivating forms of literacy that extend beyond information retrieval. As emphasized in earlier sections, engagement with Greek texts requires sustained attention, structural analysis and interpretive reasoning. These processes correspond to what recent educational frameworks describe as “deep literacy”: the ability to evaluate, integrate and apply information instead of simply accessing it.¹⁰⁹

At the primary level, this shift can be addressed through structured questioning and dialogue. Activities that focus on interpretation - such as identifying perspective, analysing meaning or evaluating actions within a narrative - encourage students to move beyond surface comprehension. For example, when students engage with a short narrative such as

¹⁰⁹ OECD (2024).

the *birth of Athena* from the head of Zeus, they are invited not only to understand the sequence of events but also to reflect on meaning, symbolism and causality through guided questions.

Similarly, short fables such as the *Hare and the Tortoise* provide a framework for discussing action, intention and outcome, while reinforcing vocabulary and structure through repeated use. In such contexts, language functions as a medium of interpretation, and understanding develops through engagement with meaning.

From a pedagogical perspective, the role of technology is to support these processes within a structured framework in which interpretation remains central, with digital tools, including AI-assisted media, enhancing visualization, facilitating interaction and providing additional input. The implications are therefore primarily methodological, as the increasing automation of access to information shifts the focus of language education towards the development of cognitive and interpretive capacities, to which the study of Ancient Greek contributes by combining linguistic structure with sustained engagement in interpretation.

SECTION 10: CONCLUSION: ANCIENT GREEK AND CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Contemporary education is increasingly formed by technological change, expanding access to information while raising concerns about attention, comprehension and sustained engagement. Within this context, the role of language learning requires reconsideration.

The preceding analysis has argued that the teaching of Ancient Greek, when approached through experiential and meaning-centred methods, can contribute to the development of core cognitive and linguistic capacities. These include structured reasoning, interpretive awareness and sustained engagement with language.

The LOGOS framework provides a model through which these capacities can be cultivated in primary education. By integrating literacy, orality, grammar, continuity and narrative, it aligns linguistic instruction with broader educational objectives related to comprehension, communication and critical thinking.

Evidence from programme-based observation suggests that such an approach can support measurable gains in retention, comprehension and participation, even within limited instructional time. While further research is required to assess its application across different linguistic contexts, the findings indicate that early engagement with Ancient Greek is both feasible and pedagogically relevant.

More broadly, this discussion supports a redefinition of the role of classical languages in education. Rather than functioning solely as objects of historical study, they may serve as structured environments for the development of interpretive and cognitive skills. In this sense, the value of Ancient Greek lies not only in its cultural significance but in its capacity to support forms of learning that remain essential in contemporary educational contexts.

EPILOGUE

The concept of *logos* brings together language, reason and meaning, expressing a unity in which form and understanding are inseparable. The LOGOS framework proposed in this paper translates that unity into pedagogical practice by structuring learning around literacy, orality, grammar, ongoing connection and storytelling, so that language is encountered as meaningful and coherent from the outset.

Within this framework, students engage with language as a system that carries meaning, invites interpretation and develops through use, and in doing so they acquire not only linguistic competence but also the ability to recognise patterns, establish connections and sustain attention across increasingly complex material. What emerges over time is a stable mode of engagement, in which language supports thought and thought, in turn, deepens language, allowing understanding to extend beyond individual forms to the structures that organise them.

Seen in this way, the teaching of Ancient Greek extends beyond the transmission of a linguistic tradition and becomes a structured environment for the development of sustained and meaningful literacy, understood as the capacity to engage with language attentively, interpret it with precision and retain it as part of a coherent cognitive framework.

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