

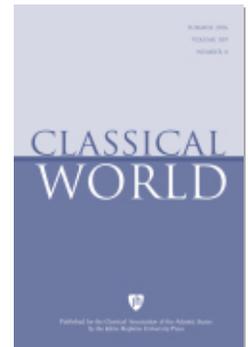


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Classical World, Volume 109, Number 4, Summer 2016, pp. 507-523 (Article)



Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/clw.2016.0047>

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Barbarisms at the Gate: An Analysis of Some Perils in Active Latin Pedagogy*

PATRICK M. OWENS

ABSTRACT: Active Latin pedagogy (i.e., pedagogy which involves active speaking or writing in Latin) has garnered a great deal of interest over the past three decades. This article briefly discusses the recent history of this approach in the U.S. and the success it has had. It then presents an analysis of three general categories of error frequently arising in classrooms and communities using active Latin. Types of errors covered include (1) semantic shifts and misidentification of meanings in source material; (2) poorly formed neologisms; and (3) grammatical and syntactical solecisms. Finally, the reasons why and how practitioners of active Latin should be on guard against such errors are explored, and the author advocates some specific improvements in Latin pedagogy.

The explosion of active Latin pedagogy over the past three decades has reshaped the teaching of Latin in our schools. To most teachers of modern languages, the use of the spoken language for didactic purposes is absolutely essential, yet to most teachers of classical languages, any genuine communication in Latin is still quite foreign. We are, however, approaching a crucial tipping-point wherein the first generation of students educated during the major revival of active Latin pedagogy are approaching leadership roles. These practitioners of active Latin are not only evangelizing their peers, but are also teaching ever more students to regard Latin as an actual language capable of meaningful communication, in which they can ultimately think without the need for an intermediary language of translation. Although the active-Latin movement has grown exponentially, the success of the trend is hampered by both

* A form of this article was delivered at the 2014 CAMWS Annual Meeting in Waco, Texas, in Latin. I wish to express my gratitude to David Noe for organizing and chairing that panel.

an unwillingness on the part of some entrenched teachers and administrators, and the ire of critics who charge that this is a futile exercise which does not approximate the Latin a student is likely to encounter in texts. Proponents of active Latin ought not to discount this criticism; for, although interest in spoken Latin has grown immensely, most teachers have not attained proficiency (sometimes called fluency). As a result, advanced students and teachers of active Latin should be on guard against falling into certain dangers which give critics an opening against the entire movement and can rob students of an authentic learning experience with the Latin language.

The term “living Latin” is itself misleading. Linguistically speaking, Latin is a dead language (i.e., it does not change in some significant ways) and has been dead for nearly two thousand years. This fact is not lost on the greatest proponents of spoken Latin.¹ Although there are many different lenses through which one can understand the death of a language, the death of Latin should not be confused with the extinction of a small indigenous language which will never again be decipherable or the death of the last native speaker; by the death of Latin, we refer to the fossilization through formalization and standardization, which allowed for a kind of apotheosis.² This fossilization is attested as early as Quintilian, who delivers a highly prescriptive system of grammar and refers to Cicero as the speaker par excellence.³ Even before Quintilian, Cicero promotes the conservation of some already antiquated grammatical rules when he chides his son in Athens.⁴ Generations of Latin authors, from Quintilian to Aquinas to Erasmus, point to Cicero and his contemporaries as the touchstone of Latin usage, which enshrines classical Latin as normative and standard. If Latin were to come back from

¹ For a fuller discussion, see W. Stroh, *Latein ist tot, es lebe Latein!: kleine Geschichte einer grossen Sprache* (Berlin 2004), 7–8; W. Stroh. “De lingua Latina non semel mortua, semper rediviva.” (Institut für Klassische Philologie) Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, May 25, 2007. <http://stroh.userweb.mwn.de/schriften/lingualatina.pdf>. Accessed August 1, 2015.

² C. Hagège, *On the Death and Life of Languages* (New Haven 2009) 51–70.

³ J. Farrell, *Latin Language and Latin Culture from Ancient to Modern Times* (Cambridge 2001), 111–12. See also *Cicero, ut mihi quidem videtur, et iucundus incipientibus quoque et apertus est satis, nec prodesse tantum sed etiam amari potest: tum, quem ad modum Liuius praecipit, ut quisque erit Ciceroni simillimus* (Quint. *Inst.* 2.5.20). Quintilian offers precepts drawn from Cicero throughout his work.

⁴ *Cicero per epistulam culpatur filium, dicens male cum dixisse “direxi litteras duas,” cum litterae quotiens epistulam significant, numeri tantum pluralis sint* (Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 8.168).

the dead, so to speak, it would immediately lose its greatest virtue: its substantial immutability.⁵

When living languages come into contact with each other, they generally influence one another, and depending upon the environment, also borrow from one another. This is, of course, one of the ways languages change and new languages are born, to which process we owe the origin of the Romance languages from Latin. The most elementary historical considerations suggest that the true revival of a dead language produces a new variety of language.⁶ In death, Latin gained for itself its property of immutability which makes it so very valuable and allows for its continuous application. Latin's offspring, the Romance languages, continue to change and mutate. As evidence of this, a modern Parisian cannot read the eleventh-century *Chanson de Roland* (*The Song of Roland*), nor, I am told, can the average Spaniard read *La Celestina* (c. 1499). A properly trained Latinist can, however, read Plautus' comedies (c. 200 BC), Augustine's *Confessions* (c. 398 AD), Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* (c. 830 AD), Anselm (1033–1109), Petrarch (1304–1374), Erasmus (1466–1536), and *Nuntii Latini* (1989–present), with little or no difficulty. This is because literary Latin has resisted change for nearly two thousand years.⁷

Despite the different terms classicists use to categorize subsets of Classical Latin literature, the conservative elements within the literary use of Latin preserved it from evolving into the Romance languages in the way that vulgar and Medieval Latin did. Neo-Latin does not describe a new dialect of Latin, but rather the return to classical norms after Medieval Latin. Perhaps the Latin term for Neo-Latin literature is more fitting: *Litterae Latinae Recentiores*. Renaissance Latin authors show a return to the classical sources of Latin elocution and the language's conservative nature, which was remarkable even in antiquity. The didactic works of Erasmus, Corderius, Vives, (Iacobus) Pontanus, and

⁵ See Stroh (above, n.1) and L. Miraglia, "Latino e Greco alla Prova: La verifica delle competenze nella didattica delle lingue classiche," *Docere* 1.1 (2002) 23–33.

⁶ For the causes of language death, and for the concerns surrounding the resuscitation of dead languages, see Hagège (above, n.2) 75–168, 311–27. R. Wright (*Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* [Liverpool 1982]) argues that this is also the case for Medieval Latin.

⁷ See J. N. Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin, 200 BC–AD 600* (Cambridge 2007); A. G. Rigg (83–92) and T. Tunberg (130–136) in F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg, eds., *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington 1996).

Commenius demonstrate how Latin can be used in an active way while avoiding medievalisms and general barbarisms. Although this more cultivated Latin was used in the universities, trade, diplomacy, governance, and the Church, humanists took care that the active use of Latin did not turn the Roman tongue into Frankenstein's monster by bringing it into an artificial life. These humanists were not interested in language resuscitation but desired to use a dead language actively without changing its basic grammar and syntax. This remains true of the most successful practitioners of active Latin today.⁸

The fossilization of Latin is the property that sets it apart from modern languages. When instructors of modern languages speak of "language socialization" and "linguistic negotiation" and "informal linguistic environments," they are, perhaps without realizing it, thinking exclusively of living languages and, when they theorize on such principles or propose teaching methods on the assumption of a living language, their conclusions can be erroneous. The social circle of Latin is not a pick-up game of basketball in Quebec or a meal at a Mexican restaurant; its very authors define and constitute our *societas* and our *res publica*. There is a great deal that modern language instruction has taught, and can teach, teachers of classical languages. Among the leaders pioneering new methods, some have brought a great deal of TPR (Total Physical Response pedagogy), TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling pedagogy) and even other novel teaching methods into the Latin classroom; however, Latin *is* different from modern languages,⁹ and our goals in teaching Latin differ greatly from those of the modern-language curriculum. For example, it is a legitimate goal to learn just enough French to order a baguette in Paris, or only the phrases and grammar of Italian necessary to travel in Florence, with no further aspirations to the literary language. These expectations inform the introductory courses of modern languages. However, such goals are entirely

⁸ Consider the manifesto of T. Tunberg and M. Minkova, *Amphora* 4.2 (2005) 8–16 and available at <http://apaclassics.org/sites/default/files/documents/amphora4.2.pdf>. The stated goal of the SALVI Institute's immersion programs is the same (<http://www.latin.org/resources/documents/whyspeaklatin.php>) as is that of the Paideia Institute (<http://www.paideiainstitute.org/about/living-latin-and-greek>).

⁹ This is a reference to R. Patrick's thought-provoking piece, "Latin is Not Different," The North American Institute for Living Latin Studies, SALVI, at [http://www.latin.org/resources/documents/Latin%20is%20Not%20Different%20\[Patrick%202011\].pdf](http://www.latin.org/resources/documents/Latin%20is%20Not%20Different%20[Patrick%202011].pdf). Accessed August 1, 2015.

alien to our proposition: the mere colloquial and vulgar tongue in Latin is not what we aim to achieve even as a stepping-stone.¹⁰

Others before me have outlined the different motivations that lead people to speak Latin.¹¹ In addition, the reasons why and how active Latin pedagogy helps students to better understand the texts have been extensively researched and articulated elsewhere.¹² My own experience as both student and teacher confirms these conclusions. Herein, I will constrain my remarks only to advanced practitioners and teachers who use active Latin with the intended goal of improving reading skills. This leaves the question of *how* Latin ought to be spoken in order to achieve that end.¹³ Since the primary aim of active Latin, as it is conceived of here, is a more profound mastery of the language's vocabulary and syntax, as far as possible the student of Latin should look to the best authors for language input and imitate those examples during language output.

The active use of a language helps the student to internalize its elements because the act of formulation makes certain demands on a speaker. For instance, when one is attempting to communicate one's own exercise routine, it is no longer enough to recognize that the word *currere* means "to run"; rather, one must recall it in an active way, determine the correct morphology, and place it into a meaningful sentence using appropriate syntax. These actions work to sharpen the student's mastery of the language. A friend of mine once took a course entitled "German for Reading." When the course was over I asked him if he knew German, to which he responded, "Of course not. Maybe I can read an article with a dictionary, but no, I don't know German." For students who want to know Latin, and for teachers who want their students to know Latin, a

¹⁰ By *colloquial* I do not mean the Latin of Terence and Plautus, which are literary monuments and were (especially Terence) regarded by the ancients as exemplars of cultured speech. For no one would describe the language of Shakespeare or Shaw or Miller as *colloquial* English, despite the appearance of conversation.

¹¹ See S. T. Rasmussen, "Why Oral Latin?" *TCL* 6.1 (2014) 1–9; S. A. Berard, "Perennial Latin in the Modern World: Where Should We Now Be Heading and Why?" California Classical Association–South (Los Angeles 2009); Stroh (above, n.1) 290–307. There is also some discussion of these motivations in F. Waquet, *Latin, Or, The Empire of the Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London 2001) 152–71, but this must be tempered by an understanding of Renaissance history. See also T. Tunberg, *De rationibus quibus homines docti artem Latine colloquendi et ex tempore dicendi saeculis XVI et XVII coluerunt* (Louvain 2012).

¹² Miraglia (above, n.5); Berard (above, n.11)

¹³ For a broader overview of the practice of active Latin, see T. Tunberg's essay at <https://sites.google.com/site/delatinaterecentiore/> (2009). Accessed August 1, 2015.

reading course alone is not enough. Activating the oral and aural components is not only essential to really *knowing* a language, but can also make for better readers. In my experience, readers who speak Latin not only read texts faster but can more readily identify figures of speech, intertextual references, and shifts in linguistic register.

It is the role of the instructor to ensure that the intermediate good of active Latin, namely the ability to converse with other speakers, does not interfere with the primary stated goal of fostering greater reading ability of authentic texts.¹⁴ This must remain the utmost concern of the proponents of active Latin. For, when such care is not taken, the whole *raison d'être* of the movement is undermined. By definition, dead languages are resistant to language change, but through the indiscriminate active use of a dead language without a constant and conscious effort not to admit variation to the language's phonological, morphological, semantic, lexical, and syntactic features, a dead language naturally begins to morph into something else: a pidgin of the original.¹⁵ Such a transition often begins from language interference or the importing of language patterns and conventions from a foreign language. When described in proscriptivist terms, this interference is a type of barbarism. Since it is the standard literary language that classicists want students to learn, the project of active Latin is self-defeating when it gives rise to a barbarous dialect of Latin, which, in its most extreme form, is actually a new Romance dialect.

Barbarisms are nothing new,¹⁶ which is precisely why the *Antibarbaron*¹⁷ was such a valuable tool for Renaissance authors. Latinists of the Renaissance often used the genre of dialogues to inculcate students

¹⁴ For this reason, extremely rare words appearing only in glosses or inscriptions should be eschewed in favor of words used by canonical authors; e.g., *antigerio* appears in Festus as a synonym of *valde*, and is already spurned by Quintilian as farfetched (*Inst.* 8.3.25). Similarly, medieval words or constructions, among students of classical Latin, should not displace the more classical vocabulary or stylistics.

¹⁵ On Latin and pidgins, see J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin language* (New York 2003) 93–94. While there is plenty to be said about why and how the pronunciation of Latin has and has not changed in more than two millennia, I will limit my remarks to the semantic, lexical, and syntactic features. For more on Latin conversation and extemporaneous speech, see T. Tunberg (above, n.11).

¹⁶ See Quint. *Inst.* 1.5; M. D. Hyman, *Barbarism and Solecism in Ancient Grammatical Thought* (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2002).

¹⁷ The *Antibarbaron* (or *Antibarbarum*) was a reference handbook of polished language containing elegant phrases and condemnations of certain barbarisms and solecisms of the times.

with the diction outlined in *Antibarbara*. Today, however, new barbarisms have developed in classrooms and small communities of Latin speakers, with limited efforts to correct them in a systematic way. These departures from the norms of the texts and the authors, the reading of which the active instruction of Latin ought to facilitate, not only hinder the attainment of the proposed goal and will ultimately produce a pidgin of Latin when left unchecked, but also leave the entire movement open to ridicule by the establishment. Those who oppose active Latin can then rightly claim that Latin speakers are exercising some Esperantistic program, coining new words willy-nilly without taking into account the native features of the tongue. One would hope that no reputable scholar would condemn today's active-Latin movement based on the Latinity of its least skilled and least experienced practitioners; many of these barbarisms, however, are found at the highest levels of some Latin-speaking communities and summer conferences. Chiding beginning-Latin speakers about their vocabulary choices or syntax is unlikely to garner interest in the practice or subject matter, and will certainly make students feel self-conscious and raise what Krashen calls the *Affective Filter*,¹⁸ but advanced practitioners of active Latin should be able to consider their role in using or spreading some of the following types of errors. The remarks here are not intended as a reproach but rather as a stimulus to conversation across the different spheres of active Latin pedagogy. Due to concerns of space, I will limit the discourse to three specific categories of common barbarisms arising in active Latin pedagogy, which I will illustrate using only a few examples, with the proverb *ab uno disce omnes* in mind.

One major cause of errors in active Latin is the misuse of ancient sources by either semantic errors or false analogies. In an age of digitized lexica, a student of Latin can easily input a term into a search engine to find a Latin equivalent for an English word, but there are rarely perfect equivalents, and such searches often require the inspection of the original source or a solid knowledge of British English.¹⁹ The ability to immediately

¹⁸ A brief outline of Krashen's *Affective Filter* and *Monitor* theories can be found in A. O. Hadley, *Teaching Language in Context*, 3rd ed. (Boston 2001), 61–64. This passing reference to an uncontentious theory should not be read as a wholesale acceptance of Krashen's other theories and works.

¹⁹ Consider the term *corn* for grain, which is often a source of confusion among American students. There are also horror stories of students who, after several years of nursing school, received diplomas in *artibus nutricis* (the wet-nurse's arts).

consult dictionaries without regard for the context in which a word appears has yielded some strange misinterpretations. For example, Joseph (“Caelestis”) Eichinseer in his lexica and his associate Sigrid Albert in her *Imaginum Vocabularium Latinum* both give *quilon* as an equivalent for jam/jelly with a picture of preserves and a slice of toast.²⁰ A reverse search of *Lewis & Short* for the term *jelly* returns only one hit: *quilon*. In fact, *quilon* appears to be either a kind of azurite or the jelly of the human eye.²¹ I have never eaten breakfast in Saarbrücken, Germany, but if they consume *quilon* there, I do not wish to. The preferred term might be *poma conditiva* or *conditura*.²² This is just one instance of modern practitioners of Latin prescribing vocabulary drawn from other lexica without the necessary care for the original textual context and specific meaning.

In addition, there are many colloquial terms which students frequently seek from the instructor. A class simply cannot engage in active Latin in the classroom without certain terms such as “Hello,” “Thank you,” “You’re welcome,” and “I’m sorry.” Most introductory Latin textbooks teach *paenitere* as “to regret, to cause regret, to displease.” Indeed some handbooks for spoken Latin give the verb as meaning “it causes me to be sorry” with the phrase *paenitet me* as an equivalent to “I’m sorry.” Although such wording is a rough equivalent, the English phrase “I’m sorry” has come to have a much wider semantic value and application than the Latin verb *paenitere* allows.²³ This has given rise among some Latin speakers and communities to this sort of exchange:

Discipulus: Avia mea mortua est. (“My grandmother died.”)

Magister: O! Me paenitet! (“Oh, I am repentant!”)

Such an exchange is only appropriate if the teacher killed the student’s granny, and who wants to study Latin with a granny-killer? The compassionate “I’m sorry” is better rendered as *doleo vicem tuam* or *condoleo*. Such ambiguities in one’s mother tongue can lead to the

²⁰ See J. C. Eichenseer, *Latinitas viva: Tabulae imagineae numero nonaginta*, 2nd ed. (Saarbrücken 1984); S. Albert, *Imaginum vocabularium Latinum*, 2nd ed. (Saraviponti 2009).

²¹ *quilon* appears as *cylon* in the OLD.

²² Cf. lemmata jam, jelly, preserves in the *Morgan Lexicon*, D. W. Morgan and P. M. Owens, eds. <http://www.wyomingcatholiccollege.com/faculty-pages/patrick-owens/index.aspx> Accessed August 1, 2015.

²³ The OLD gives the relevant meaning of *paenitere* as “To affect (a person) with regret (for an action, etc. for which he is responsible).”

over-generalization of a Latin phrase, especially when the speaker is pegging Latin diction to modern-language idioms.

Within language learning, induction and analogy are important skills. Analogy, however, is one of the very causes of language change, and using analogy in Latin without carefully consulting the ancient sources can encourage mutations. For instance, there are in Latin a number of temporal adverbs that have as their strengthened forms a reduplication, such as *iam* and *iamiam* (“already,” “right now”), *modo* and *modomodo* (“just now,” “a second ago”), and *nunc* and *nuncinunc* (“now,” “right this very second”). Among Latin-speaking communities across the globe, however, another such temporal adverb reduplicated for strengthening has only recently emerged: **moxmox* from *mox* (“now”). This is a particularly interesting case of addition without textual basis because, unlike any other example here (or elsewhere, to my knowledge), this error used to be pervasive throughout disparate groups of Latinists, which demonstrates cross-pollination across continental and philosophical divides. When certain leaders of large Latin-speaking communities or conferences heard that **moxmox* was unattested in literature, the news was met with disbelief. After having investigated the matter, some stopped using and teaching it, but others, even those who profess that the corpus of literature ought to define our approach to the language, argued that **moxmox* was a justifiable addition.

This difference in philosophy and approach highlights the rifts that have formed in practice between those who prefer a “living” approach to Latin pedagogy and those who prioritize the immortal and immutable quality of the Latin language.²⁴ Here the argument might be made that “if we are willing to accept words for telescope (*telescopium*) or electricity (*electris* or *vis electrica*), what prevents us from accepting also **moxmox* and its ilk?” This is a false analogy. While it is true that neologisms can pose a danger due to the nature of a dead language, such tension has existed since antiquity whenever entirely new concepts or technologies have been introduced.²⁵ **moxmox*, on the other hand, is a completely unnecessary coinage and one that obscures the meaning of *mox*. For, if a strengthened form of *mox* were to exist, it would weaken

²⁴ M. Dalton, “Caveat Emptor: Lovers of Latin Try to Sell a Dead Tongue.” *WSJ* (New York, January 8, 2014).

²⁵ Cf. *Nova verba non sine quodam periculo fingere* (Quint. *Inst.* 1.5.71); *Sunt enim rebus novis nova ponenda nomina* (Cic. *De Nat.* 1.44.12).

the less marked (and attested) form; the use of **moxmox*, therefore, is misleading to students and to readers in general. From the standard dictionary citations, *mox* appears to mean both “soon” and “very soon.” A more marked word *citius* and its superlative *citissime* are alternative choices also attested with these meanings.

The management of neologisms in general is the second major source of confusion in the modern active-Latin classroom. Even during the classical age, Cicero and Lucretius identified the need for coinages in Latin. Later, Augustine, Lactantius, and Tertullian broadened the Latin lexicon with necessary ecclesiastic vocabulary. These Christian authors had a profound sense of the personality of Latin, and their coinages reflect a solicitude for the integrity of the language. Similarly, Latin humanists increased the copiousness of Latin vocabulary without causing a breakdown of Latin syntax and grammar.²⁶ Unlike this history of careful additions to the language over the prior millennia, there is no dearth of examples of bad neologisms and coinages from the past half-century. Such coinages seem to fall into three major categories: (1) those based on faulty, misunderstood, or mixed roots; (2) those borrowed from other languages (besides Greek); and (3) those involving verbs.

The first category includes such examples as *photocopiatrum*, a word proposed by Eichenseer for “a copy-machine,” a concept obviously foreign to ancient and Renaissance Latin authors.²⁷ At first glance, this may seem an acceptable coinage: *phōto-* from the Greek root φωτο- the suffix *-trum* like that in *aratrum*, *rostrum* and *haustrum*. The root **-cōpia-* appears to pertain to *cōp(i)s*, *cōpis* (“abundant in,” “rich in”), which has as its root *opi-* (as seen in *ops*, *opis*). But the verbal root **copiare* is not attested except in some very late Medieval texts in Italy, where it attained its modern meaning in the vernacular language (i.e., Italian *copiare* means “to copy”). Moreover, the suffix *-trum* is a non-productive suffix and was archaic even in the classical period, as demonstrated by Mir.²⁸ Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this word is particularly at

²⁶ J. Ijsewijn, “De vocabulis adunatim et caespitare apud Fortunatianum Episcopum,” *Latinitas* 11.3 (1963) 225–29.

²⁷ Eichenseer (above, n.20) 45 n.7; Albert (above, n.20), 119 n.2.

²⁸ See J. M. Mir, *Quomodo nomina agentium et instrumentorum appellantur a veteribus Romanis, a scriptoribus mediae aetatis et ineuntis saeculi vicesimi*, *Latinitas* 32.2 (1984) 177–96. Mir wrote a manual of Latin terminology and dialogues for modern usage, which enjoyed a modicum of success among Italian and Spanish Latinists (as evidenced by its application among the writers for the Latin periodical *Latinitas* published by the

odds with the tendencies of Latin, in that it is a mix of Greek and Latin roots in the same word. While it is true that even the best Latin authors borrowed a great deal from Greek, which they sometimes appropriated into Latin and other times kept in Greek,²⁹ there are extremely few attested words that are a mixture of Greek and Latin roots.³⁰

To give another example, probably every teacher of Latin who has attempted to introduce some active Latin in the classroom has had to learn a word for a writing instrument. While there are several different terms in Latin, *stilographium*, another one of Eichenseer's coinages, is an example of a poor neologism for "pen." Again, Eichenseer mixed Latin and Greek roots (*stilus* and γράφ-) to form this word. More to the point, there was no need for a neologism here, since Romans had a writing utensil not entirely dissimilar to the modern pen. The *calamus* ("reed") could hold some ink internally which would drip down to the point. A ballpoint pen is slightly different from a *calamus*, but the modern book is very different from a Roman *liber* and certainly the modern shoe is a far cry from a Roman *calceus*, and yet no one proposes that neologisms are necessary in those cases.

A similar trend of mixing Latin and Greek roots is found in the misuse of the suffix *-ista* (from the Greek -ιστης, signifying an agent). While many Latin words do end in *-ista*, the majority derives from a Greek root to which this suffix is added and those that do consist of mixed roots are mostly very late. The barbarisms of *linguista* for *glottologus* and *Latinista* for *Latinitatis cultor* or *Latine loquens* are misleading and without merit.³¹

Other examples of faulty neologisms arise from borrowings or loan words. The Romans borrowed from contemporary languages very

Vatican). Some of Mir's work can be appreciated as an example of how the current movement discusses neologisms. Nevertheless, Eichenseer's projects were better funded and backed by a German university; in the end, his terms were used more widely in the Latin periodicals *Melissa* and *Vox Latina*, as well as many books published by their respective publishing houses.

²⁹ Cf. *Non enim atomus ab atomo pulsa declinat* (Cic. *De Fat.* 22.6); *Non imitor λακωνισμὸν tuum* (Cic. *Ep.* II. 25.2).

³⁰ One example of mixed roots in antiquity is *hamiota* ("fisherman"), which is extremely rare and is obviously meant to excite laughter, cf. *conchitae atque hamiotae* (Plaut. *Rud.* 2.2); *conchita* is a hapaxlegomenon, coined to sound like Greek for a "catcher of shellfish."

³¹ This is even more egregious when the term *mediolatinista* is used for a medieval Latinist, since "medio," which is not a prefix in Latin or Greek, is combined with the already barbarous term *Latinista*. *Latinitatis medievalis cultor* would suffice.

sparingly and seemingly did so only when nothing similar existed in Latin.³² The best Renaissance authors also refrained from borrowing from modern languages. Examples of this type of error are numerous in modern active Latin, however, and include **pipa* (from the Romance languages for a “smoking pipe,” Latin *infumibulum/ infundibulum*);³³ **gunna* (from the Italian *gonna* for “skirt” and for the same, Latin *cal-tula*);³⁴ **buto* (from the English “button” for the Latin *orbiculus* or *globulus*);³⁵ **bicyclum* (from the English “bicycle” for the Latin *birota*); **campio* (from the Romance languages and English for “champion,” Latin *victor*).³⁶

In a similar way, modern terms are sometimes literally translated or rendered as Latin calques. An example of this is the near-ubiquitous term **interrete* for “Internet.” Of course, *rete* means “net,” but the prefix *inter-* is very rare as a substantive prefix, and the few times it appears it means something quite different from the English prefix.³⁷ For this reason, *rete* alone might suffice when the internet context is obvious, but *rete omnium gentium* or *rete universale* are better renderings. As a corollary to **interrete* is the recently coined adverb *telephonice* to mean “on the telephone.” The formation of the word conforms well to the Greek norms, but it ought to mean “in a telephonic way;” that is, not by a telephone but in a way similar to a telephone. A better way to express the instrumental use would be with a mere ablative *telephono* or *telephoni ope*.

The third and last category of problematic neologisms is that of verbs. Since the pre-classical age, Latin has been resistant to new verbs. Indeed this tendency is part of the inherent character of the language.

³² Among the relatively few are *haruspex* from Etruscan; *sabbata* from Hebrew; *mappalia* from Punic; *braccae* from Celtic.

³³ See Albert (above, n.20) 98; A. Bacci, *Lexicon eorum vocabulorum quae difficilium Latine redduntur*, 3rd ed. (Rome 1955); Plin. *N.H.* 24.135.

³⁴ Eichenseer (above, n.20) 6; Plaut. *Epid.* 231.

³⁵ Eichenseer (above, n.20) 5; *oriculus* appears in humanist J. L. Vives’ *Exercitatio linguae Latinae* (1523); for *gunna* and *buto*, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* for those lemmata.

³⁶ For **bicyclum* and **campio*, see C. Kirshner, *Vox Populi: Latin Through Modern Conversations* (Chapel Hill 2014).

³⁷ *Inter-* as a nominal prefix signifies that which goes between or is situated between, e.g., *intermundia* the spaces between the worlds; *internuntius* a messenger between two parties; *intercapedo* the interval between action. Therefore **interrete*, by analogy would mean the space between two nets, and not a net between many terminals as the English “Internet” means.

This quality is demonstrated in the rear index of Hoven's *Lexique de la prose latine de la Renaissance*,³⁸ which is organized by part of speech, wherein there is a very short list of verbs unattested in earlier sources. The context of those newly coined verbs shows that many of them were meant in jest or as puns.³⁹ In contrast, in today's active Latin classrooms and resources, examples of these errors are manifold. They include **photographare* (i.e., *photographema/ imaginem excipere*), **birotare* (i.e., *birota vehi*) and **googliare* (i.e., *per situm Googlianum/ nomine Google quaerere*). Admittedly, these words would be convenient additions to the language for an economy of expression, but the tendency toward such an economy is the principle of least effort, which itself brings about language change. Such coinages also violate an innate character of the Latin tongue, which the instructor should make manifest to students rather than obscure. If a Latin speaker never recognizes that the language avoids verbal neologisms, the humor or register or connotation of the instances where such coinages do appear are lost on the reader.

At this point, a sincere reader might ask, "What difference does it make whether we call a photocopier a *photocopiatrum* or a *machina phototypica* or for that matter a *photocopierus*? Since these items do not appear in classical literature, why do the words matter at all?" The way in which a language forms vocabulary and its lexical properties is part of the very fabric and nature of the language; lexical formation is no less a part of a language than its morphology, phonology, or syntax. An appreciation of Latin lexical formation allows a reader to better ponder *why the author said it this way and not another way* and furnishes students with a deeper familiarity with the genius of the language. Lastly, the greatest virtue of Latin, its immutability, is compromised when we admit to our writing or speech ill-formed lexemes that break with tradition.

The final general type of widespread error among modern practitioners of active Latin is the solecism, that being an element of speech that is incorrect grammatically or syntactically. These errors have little to do with the fact that modern Latinists are speaking a dead language and much more to do with a lack of familiarity with the more subtle uses of mood and the more difficult syntactical constructions. The real problem here is that most Latinists do not know Latin as well as we should (and I include myself in this statement). It requires a massive

³⁸ R. Hoven, *Lexique de la prose latine de la Renaissance* (Leiden 2006)

³⁹ I am indebted to Terence Tunberg for pointing out the example of the Hoven index.

amount of reading or speaking with an expert speaker to hear or read the most difficult constructions modeled and a great deal of dedication to exercise those constructions actively. For instance, it is not unusual for a Latin teacher, upon hearing that someone speaks Latin, to utter something in Latin like **Scio quomodo legere sed nescio quomodo loqui*. What is clearly meant is *Scio legere sed nescio loqui* (“I know how to read but I don’t know how to speak”). Of course, the speaker has forgotten that *scire* and *nescire* are construed with the infinitive in such cases, and that *quomodo*, if it were required, would set off an indirect question requiring the subjunctive. Similar difficulties also frequently arise with conditionals. Conditional sentences in any language can cause second-language learners trouble. All the currently popular introductory Latin texts teach conditional sentences and *oratio obliqua* (indirect speech), but none teach conditional sentences in *oratio obliqua*, even though these account for a great many appearances of conditionals both in Latin literature and in English daily speech.⁴⁰

As a final example, English has only one disjunctive, namely “or,” whereas Latin has several disjunctives (viz., *aut, sive, vel, an, -ve*) which all have different senses and uses. It is not possible to have a discourse about all of these uses here, but one confusion appears nearly ubiquitous among teachers of spoken Latin: **Verum aut falsum* for *Verum an falsum?* (“True or false.”)⁴¹ Not long ago I heard a Latinist give a presentation on introducing active Latin into the classroom whose lesson plan relied heavily on asking students whether a given statement was true or false, but in doing so, he used the assertive disjunctive *aut* rather than the polar disjunctive interrogative *an*. This mistake renders the answer to the question as the affirmative *ita vero* (“Yes, indeed”), meaning it is indeed either true or false.

There are many other examples of this kind of gaffe within communities and among educators practicing spoken Latin, but here it is perhaps advantageous to remember that no one (as far as I know) speaks Latin without admitting some errors. In fact, most speakers of Standard English or Standard Italian or other formally standardized languages also err unwillingly or unknowingly. This does not mean, however, that we as a community of speakers who aim to approximate the Latinity

⁴⁰ Consider sentences such as, “I told you that if you didn’t finish your work, you wouldn’t be allowed to go play.”

⁴¹ T. K. Arnold and G. G. Bradley, *Arnold’s Latin Prose Composition* (New York 1908) §171.

of classical authors should embrace these errors. On the contrary, we should work to stretch ourselves ever closer to our goal. The society and culture into which we want to enculturate ourselves and our students is a republic of letters, in which the average author uses a literary register of language. This is precisely why some of the pedagogy of the modern languages may be less than conducive to our project of bringing students closer to the sources of Western thought. Time spent on the lower registers of quotidian speech is worthwhile only insofar as it serves the larger purpose through the exercise of the morphology, grammar, and syntax found in classical authors.

Active Latin pedagogy does not require any kind of special justification: research abounds that using language actively helps the student retain new vocabulary and master sentence structures more quickly than the grammar-translation method alone. The recognition that the community of Latin speakers could do a better job at being consistent in our goals and practices ought not to turn the best into the enemy of the good. Part of learning a language is making mistakes, and *errando discitur*; the teacher of advanced Latin students should walk a razor's edge. The instructor ought to model good Latin idiom while also allowing students the necessary space to create natural speech unimpeded by corrective interruptions. One would hope, however, that among instructors and advanced practitioners of spoken Latin, a communal and collegial attempt to raise the common level of Latinity would be appreciated by those who are genuinely devoted to the study of Latin and its literature.

During the twentieth century, the teaching and use of Latin faced a crisis, and the dedication of classicists committed to reviving and preserving active Latin was essential to its survival. Now we have moved past survival mode and are reaping the benefits of that earlier work in the flourishing of active pedagogy over the past few decades. It is, therefore, a crucial time for establishing a community-wide consensus around promoting the best possible Latin in our active approaches. Today, Latin speakers and enthusiasts have a plethora of resources available to help attain that goal. There are a number of *conventicula* in Europe and North America (although Tunberg's conferences remain the largest and most renowned in the U.S.),⁴² and John Traupman's work, *Conversational Latin for Oral*

⁴² The opportunities for Latin-speaking are too numerous to list here, but there are no fewer than six separate annual summer seminars in the U.S. (including one for high-school students) and at least as many in Europe.

Proficiency, which is now in its fourth edition, has been much improved and expanded. Perhaps the most frequently overlooked resource is the digital consortium at *Stoa*, which has audio recordings of humanist dialogues read with meaningful inflection.⁴⁵ These dialogues are the very sort that were used in the Renaissance to teach extemporaneous Latin speech.⁴⁴ Through Google Books hundreds of thousands of out-of-print books are now available for free. A number of textbooks lend themselves either directly or indirectly to active Latin, most notable among them *Latin for the New Millennium*, *Vita Nostra*, and *Lingua Latina per se Illustrata: Familia Romana*. Websites like *Latinum* provide fora for those who are interested in exercising their spoken and written abilities.⁴⁵

In addition, there is no lack of lexica pertaining to modern or Neo-Latin and a few are especially worth noting. The publishing house Bolchazy & Carducci did a great service by reprinting *Smith's English–Latin Dictionary*, which is without a doubt the most copious and expansive of the English–Latin dictionaries. The Vatican has printed several dictionaries, but none surpass Bacci's monumental work *Lexicon eorum vocabulorum quae difficilius Latine redduntur*, which is a treasure of elegant expressions for items and concepts unknown to the Romans.⁴⁶ Anna Andresian's print-on-demand *Vocabula Picta An Illustrated Latin Lexicon for the Modern World* is a useful addition for schoolchildren and overlaps somewhat with Usborne's *First Thousand Words in Latin*.⁴⁷ Two works of Neo-Latin and modern Latin lexicography are worthy of mention. Hoven's *Lexique de la prose latine de la Renaissance* (Latin–English) is the most academic and scientific treatment of Renaissance vocabulary and is immensely useful for the reading of humanist literature. The *Lexicon Morganianum*, founded by David W. Morgan and still in progress, is a searchable dictionary of Latin vocabulary culled from sources from all periods of Latin for the purpose of active Latin.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ R. Scaife of the University of Kentucky produced the “Colloquia Scholastica,” which are available at <http://www.stoa.org/colloquia>. Accessed August 1, 2015.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tunberg (above, n.11)

⁴⁵ E. Millner's websites “Latinum” and “Schola” can be found at <http://latinum.org.uk> and <http://schola.network-maker.com/> respectively. Accessed August 1, 2015.

⁴⁶ The Vatican's *Lexicon Recentis Latinitatis*; Egger's *Lexicon Latinum Hodiernum*; Bacci's *Lexicon eorum vocabulorum quae difficilius Latine redduntur*.

⁴⁷ H. Amery, *The Usborne First Thousand Words in Latin*, 3rd ed. (New York 2014)

⁴⁸ The most recent of the *Lexicon Morganianum* can be found at <http://www.wyomingcatholiccollege.com/faculty-pages/patrick-owens/index.aspx>. Accessed August 1, 2015.

As the wealth of materials for spoken Latin grows, so do other innovative methodologies such as TPR and TPRS, which some instructors use to implement the communicative approach. Unlike our colleagues in modern languages, Latinists are unlikely to have an impromptu game of basketball with fellow Latin speakers or chat with a waiter at a restaurant in Latin, so in order to build fluency, we must intentionally seek out opportunities to practice speaking. The worthwhile starting point for all Latinists interested in active Latin pedagogy (or spoken Latin in general) is certainly to begin speaking with other Latinists. No speaker of any language begins speaking without errors; we should not expect either our students or ourselves to arrive at grammatically correct and fluid speech without making mistakes. Nevertheless, it is certainly beneficial to be self-critical, both as individuals and as a movement, lest we unknowingly perpetuate aberrations from standard Latin usage. For, when the aberrations are stacked, Latin becomes macaronic.

To prevent such an outcome, Latin speakers should be humble and welcome correction in order to grow in proficiency while holding fast to the ancient sources. The variety of resources dedicated to active Latin, including not only the modern manuals mentioned above, but also the nearly infinite number of Classical, Renaissance and Early Modern dialogues available for free on Google Books, and the accessibility of scholarly reference works gives both beginners and *profectiores* the ability to check their usage and Latin idioms.⁴⁹ Because of these tools, it is perhaps easier today than at any time in the last millennium for Latinists to sculpt their language in close accordance with the authors of antiquity. Such a practice is essential to serving our primary goal of producing fluent and proficient readers of antiquity.

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⁴⁹ E.g., Oxford Latin Dictionary; Forcellini's Lexicon; the corpus of Latin literature compiled by the Packard Humanities Institute; and to a lesser extent (only because it is behind a pay-wall) the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae.