

CLASSROOM HABITS TO PROMOTE ORAL LATIN

There are several habits that we as teachers can get into that will help us (and our students) use more oral Latin in the classroom. Here are some that I use:

1. Latin at the door.

I will greet students at the door with a Latin question which is already written on a whiteboard. Sometimes I will even include a choice of answers. As the year progresses I will not include answers and then I won't use the whiteboard at all. Here are some of the types of questions I use:

- a. *quid nōmen tibi est? mihi nōmen est _____.*
- b. *quot sunt duo et trēs? quot sunt unus canis et trēs canēs?* (working singular and plural nominatives)
- c. *habēsne pēnsūm* (homework)? *habeō/nōn habeō* (working transformation from “you” to “I” in the present tense)
- d. *cōnfēcistīne pēnsūm? cōnfēcī/nōn cōnfēcī* (working transformation from “you” to “I” in the present tense)

2. Warm-ups/Praeparātiōnēs.

I use transparencies for the daily warm-ups. The top of the transparency page says “*Praeparātiō*”—a word I made up. Then depending upon the day, I will write beneath it various instructions in Latin followed by the activity. For Mondays, I might write something like “*comparāte chartam novam, scrībite nōmen tuum et titulum ‘Praeparātiōnēs,’ tum trānscribite haec verba, circumscrībite indicātōrēs temporis et personae, deinde trānsvertite Anglice.*” (Get a new sheet of paper, write your name and the title *Praeparātiōnēs*, then copy these words, circle the tense indicators and personal endings, then translate into English.) This allows me then to ask students questions as they are working:

- a. *comparāsne chartam? (compārō!) ubi est charta? ubi est penna?*
- b. *scrībisne? (nōn scrībō!) cūr nōn scrībīs? labōrā! tū es ignāvissimus!*
- c. *circumscrīpsistīne indicātōrem temporis? (circumscrīpsistī) etc*
- d. *quid significat “trānscribite”? quid significat “haec verba”?* (to help those who still need help with the terms)

I may not stay entirely in Latin but do a mix of Latin and English for the benefit of the slower students, but the sharper students like the challenge of doing more in the target language. Most of the time we then discuss the rest of the warm-up, depending upon what it is, in English.

3. Classroom Directions.

Simple, repetitive classroom directions can be given in Latin. Here are some that I use on a regular basis:

- a. *quaesō, Marce, claude iānuam.*

- b. *tolle manum, quaesō/tollite manūs, quaesō.*
- c. *cōnsīde nunc! cōnsīdi te nunc!*
- d. *tacē!/tacēte! (occasionally fac taceās!)*
- e. *dēpōnite librōs et libellōs.*
- f. *aperīte librōs ad paginam sextam*.*

*Page numbers should be expressed with ordinal numbers. This is work at first, but you can keep a cheat sheet while you are learning your ordinal numbers. Students like to see who can figure out the page number the quickest. I also will have the page number in Roman numerals in the agenda on the whiteboard.

- g. *hodiē fabulam nōmine “Cerberus” legimus.*
- h. *repete/repetite*

4. **Reading together.**

I take great pleasure in reading outloud to the students but then will make them read with me the second time and perhaps even a third time through the story in level 1. I will walk around the room, threading through the rows, listening to make sure everyone is reading. In the more advanced classes, we will often do spiralling. For instance, I might start a difficult passage for them by reading it to them. We might then translate it. After that, we will all read that portion together to fix the meanings with the vocabulary and structure. This is particular effective with real Latin. For instance, if doing a section of Vergil, we might read the first 2 lines and translate them. Then we'd read them again in Latin and move on to the next 4 lines. Then we would reread all six—so you are building. By the time you get to the end of a section of Latin, the students may have read some portions of it 10 times already. It is then easier to encourage them to go home and read it again on their own.

5. **Questioning while reading.**

Questioning in Latin is particularly effective if you focus on just two or three new question words at a time, usually tied into a grammatical concept. I begin in Latin 1 with just these simple ones: *quis? ubi? quid facit?* This is a good way to reinforce parts of speech. I will only allow answers that are short—never the whole sentence (so students can't feign understanding). All answers to *ubi* MUST include the preposition (e.g. *in ātriō* NOT just *ātriō*). When you add *quem*, you can then target the contrast between *quis* and *quem* questions, and not worry about any other questions. Or, when adding *cui*, only work *cui* and *quem* questions. (Too many possibilities can create overload in young learners.) If you learn new verb tenses, you can then focus on the contrast between *quid facit*, *quid faciēbat*, and *quid fēcit*.

Effective questioning can also work vocabulary items. If the new verb is *coquit*, you can ask a variety of questions: *coquitne Grumiō in culīnā? quis coquit? ubi Caecilius coquit? coquitne Grumiō in latrīnā?* The more times a student is exposed to a new word and has to use the new word, the easier it will be for him or her to retain it.