HEA Teaching Development Grant

REPORT

Title of project:	Latin for Research – methods and resources for a postgraduate skills development training programme.

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Researchers investigating historical and/or interdisciplinary aspects of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or the Early Modern period inevitably encounter important source materials written in Latin. In Western Europe and even in the New World from late Antiquity to the beginnings of modernity, Latin was not only the preferred medium of expression for theological debate, scientific enquiry, and international diplomacy, but was also the language in which familiar quotidian documents—such as wills and deeds—were written.

Given the importance of Latin in pre-modern periods, a lack of proficiency in the language can significantly impair a researcher's investigative potential. Many British universities have recognised this fact, and a number of different initiatives have been introduced to allow graduate researchers with a basic knowledge of Latin to develop their knowledge and to gain some familiarity with the peculiarities of the post-Classical language. The National Archives, for example, have developed award-winning on-line tutorials in Latin to help with the consultation of British archives, and the Cambridge 'Latin Therapy Group' is an initiative set up by PhD students with a particular interest in the history of science, medicine and technology.

While such initiatives are certainly very useful, a number of points are immediately striking. First, given the declining popularity of Latin as a school subject, initiatives like the National Archives' on-line tutorials assume a very low level of knowledge and thus equip graduate researchers using their facilities with only a limited proficiency. While this allows some common documents to be read with a

basic level of comprehension, the skills which it inculcates do not measure up to the demands of more complex—but potentially more useful—texts, and do not allow the usefulness of certain documents to be evaluated with any great clarity. This is also true of some existing textbooks dealing with post-Classical Latin. The grammatical explanations given in E. A. Gooder, *Latin for Local History*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 1978), for example, provide a much lower level of linguistic knowledge than is necessary for an adequate comprehension of the post-Classical extracts given in the formulary. Second, those initiatives which do concentrate on introducing graduate researchers to the specificities of post-Classical Latin either assume a high level of linguistic competence or concentrate on a comparatively narrow range of genres. The Cambridge 'Latin Therapy Group', for example, is extremely useful for an introduction to scientific texts in post-Classical Latin, but has little to offer graduate researchers with interests in other fields. Third, while there are a number of initiatives which focus both on improving both grammatical knowledge and on introducing the specificities of post-Classical Latin, on-line resources and printed textbooks lack the opportunity for discussion and interpersonal dialogue which face-to-face seminars allow and which are so important to effective learning.

Recognising that researchers investigating historical and/or interdisciplinary aspects of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Early Modern period inevitably encounter important source materials written in Latin, and acknowledging the limitations of existing resources, this project was designed to provide intermediate-level Latin tuition to historians and interdisciplinary researchers working in post-Classical periods. Within this general remit, it aimed to accomplish four specific objectives:

- To increase awareness of the usefulness, if not necessity, of a basic proficiency in Latin for historical and interdisciplinary research in the Renaissance/Early Modern period.
- To develop an intermediary language programme that equips students and early-career researchers with some of the essential knowledge to tackle straightforward source material in post-classical Latin and to judge the potential research value of more complex materials.
- To evaluate the varying needs and levels of a sample group of students with a view to helping future skills providers mount similar programmes of study at other institutions.
- To develop some teaching materials for the delivery of the programme and to be shared with other teachers of post-Classical Latin / Neo-Latin for historians (broadly defined) with a particular emphasis on the Renaissance/Early Modern period.

DEVELOPMENT

This project was developed in three phases: a preparatory phase before tuition began, a phase of ongoing assessment during the programme itself, and an evaluative phase after the completion of the course of seminars.

During the preparatory phase, members of staff from a range of disciplines were consulted in order to identify key linguistic skills and to highlight priorities for the selection of post-Classical source materials. Jonathan Davies, Susan Brock, and Demmy Verbeke (who ran a similar post-Classical reading class during the last

academic year [2008-2009]) brought the benefit of their experience to the design of this project. A detailed programme for tutorials was drawn up, and sample exercises and extracts were prepared, discussed, and refined.

During the programme itself, the grammatical exercises and extracts were tailored specifically to the precise requirements of the participants. Extensive dialogue not only allowed the general standard of linguistic ability to be assessed more accurately, but also permitted additional grammatical points to be discussed, and ensured that annotations to translation exercises were as relevant and useful as possible.

After the completion of the seminar series, the teaching materials and the course itself were evaluated with a view to extending the web-based resources and developing future teaching initiatives. The teaching materials were checked, expanded, and (where necessary) amended, then uploaded onto a shared file-space and a public web platform.

REALISATION

1. Tuition and Support

The project was structured around seventeen seminars, which were attended by a number of graduate researchers at various stages in their studies and from different disciplinary backgrounds. Graduate students working towards MAs in All those who participated in the seminar programme had at least a basic knowledge of Latin (GCSE or equivalent), and were, at the outset, familiar with working only with classical Latin. The objectives of each seminar were as follows: (a) to allow participants to improve their knowledge of Latin grammar such that they would be able to comprehend simple and complex sentences in advanced classical texts; (b) to introduce participants to the historical specificities of post-Classical Latin; (c) to expose participants to a variety of different types of texts commonly used in interdisciplinary research and to introduce characteristic features of different post-Classical genres (e.g. wills, accounts, letters). With these objectives in mind, each seminar was divided into two parts, the first half being devoted to translation exercises, and the second half concentrating on grammar.

The translation exercises comprised extracts from some of the most representative 'high-status' texts and samples of common, everyday documents from a broad chronological period (c.400-c.1650). Each extract was accompanied by notes indicating any particularly unusual vocabulary or grammatical points. Contextual details were also provided where it was thought to be useful. Students prepared each translation exercise in advance, and the documents were discussed 'in the round' during seminars. Points of particular linguistic relevance were highlighted, and students were encouraged to identify how their knowledge of the language being employed in a specific text might be useful to their own research. Given the varied disciplinary backgrounds of the participants, the discussion was frequently lively and was stimulating for all involved. Texts such as an extract from Petrarch's 'Letter to Posterity' were drawn from standard editions, while others were either adapted from E. A. Gooder, *Latin for Local History*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 1978), or transcribed from a manuscript original specifically for this project.

The grammatical exercises were intended to allow students with a basic knowledge of Latin to develop their linguistic skills were carefully tailored to reflect the ability and needs of those attending seminars. Detailed notes on a clearly-defined

grammatical point were provided for each seminar, complete with examples from classical literature and exercises. Resources used for the composition of explanatory notes and exercises included: B. H. Kennedy, *The Revised Latin Primer* ed. and rev. J. Mountford (Harlow, 1962); R. M. Griffin*, Cambridge Latin Grammar* (Cambridge, 1991); R. Colebourn, *Latin Sentence and Idiom* (London, 1948). Once a basic explanation of a specific issue had been given in each seminar, the exercises were discussed as a group. Given that the grammatical exercises concentrated on classical Latin, and the translation exercises focussed on post-classical texts, considerable effort was made to highlight the manner in which certain constructions varied over time. The grammar notes were carefully attuned to the exact needs of the participants and suggestions for improvements and/or additions were solicited and followed as the seminars progressed with a view to continually honing the relevance and value of the tuition and teaching materials.

The full programme for the course of seminars was as follows:

Seminar	Translation	Grammar
1	On Stealing Pears: St. Augustine *Conf.* II, 4.	Revision: the Use of Cases.
2	Charlemagne and the Liberal Arts: Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 25.	Questions.
3	Extract from *Domesday Book* (1086).	Participles.
4	On Murder: *Leges Henrici Primi*, c. 91 (c.1115).	Reported Statements.
5	On the Peace and Security of the Kingdom: *Magna Carta* (1215).	Reported Commands.
6	A Gift (c.1250).	Purpose.
7	The Battle of Bannockburn: *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (c.1326).	Result.
8	An Account Book	Gerunds and Gerundives.
9	A Letter to Posterity: Petrarch, *Sen.* XVIII, 1 (1370-4).	Reported Questions.
10	Typical Manor Court Proceedings (1394)	Place Expressions.
11	The Florentine People Become a Political Force: Leonardo Bruni, *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII*, 2.2 (c.1419).	Fear Clauses.
12	Quitclaim (1427).	Relative Clauses.
13	Some Items from a Chapter Act Book (1454).	Time Expressions.
14	A Fifteenth-Century Will: the Last Will and Testament of Isabel	Independent Subjunctives.

	Rowley of East Retford (1456).	
15	Thomas More to Margaret Roper (1521).	*Cum* and *Dum*.
16	A Fine (1552).	Causal and Concessive Clauses.
17	A Bond (1635).	*Oratio Obliqua*.

2. Teaching Resources / Web-Based Material

Web-based Material

The grammar notes and translation exercises have been carefully checked and edited, and have been made available for download as .pdf files on the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance website (http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/postgradstudy/latin4research). A detailed bibliography has also been provided, indicating suitable dictionaries, grammar aids, word lists, and anthologies for further study. It is anticipated that this website will also be made available to other institutions and organisations involved in cultivating the knowledge of post-Classical Latin (e.g. SNLS).

Teaching Resources

The grammar notes and translation exercises have been uploaded onto a shared file-space at the University of Warwick. These resources may be used as the basis for the future development of tuition in post-Classical Latin. In 2010-2011 Latin classes of Warwick's Centre for the Study of the Renaissance are taught by Dr Luca Asmonti.

3. Transferability

As a result of the consultation amongst staff and graduate students, and the provision of web-based materials and teaching resources, this project has put down the roots from which a more fully elaborated programme of study may grow in future. It is anticipated that the exercises and extracts which have been produced for this project will be further refined and will ultimately contribute to the development of an accredited module for postgraduate students.

The possibility of holding additional Latin reading groups during the third term of this academic year has been discussed with those who participated in the seminars. Perhaps using this project's web pages both as a springboard and as a vehicle for staff guidance, it is hoped that a student-led initiative of this variety will offer an opportunity for discussions about how a more fully-developed programme of teaching may be elaborated in future.

By making the web-based materials available to a broader public in co-operation with organisations such as the Society for Neo-Latin Studies, this project will have a positive impact on interdisciplinary researchers in the wider academic community.

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