

A critical evaluation into whether rote learning of verb principal parts has any perceptible effect on accuracy of translation of Latin to English for a Year 9 class.

Assignment 1C – PGCE Classics

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May 2010**

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A critical evaluation into whether rote learning of verb principal parts has any perceptible effect on accuracy of translation of Latin to English for a Year 9 class.

Introduction

In conducting this research, I was interested to find out whether those who performed consistently well in recall testing were able to apply their knowledge to something unfamiliar. The aim was to see if students could identify a principal part when seeing it away from the context of the other principal parts of that verb, and if they were able to combine this vocabulary knowledge with linguistic knowledge.

The main reason for teaching and learning Latin ought to be so that students may eventually be able to read original Latin and gain greater understanding of literature, history and Roman life. This only becomes a real feature of the Latin syllabus at GCSE and A Level, but it is understood that a proportion of students who may study Latin in Year 9 or before will not continue to examination level. Reading courses like the *Cambridge Latin Course* have sought to encourage reading fluency in Latin pre-GCSE.

Whilst text books used to list nouns and verbs in tables which should be learnt by heart, the *Cambridge Latin Course* (CLC) introduces grammar in Latin passages so that students might develop an understanding for themselves through reading rather than rote-learning. Rote-learning is defined by the OED as learning “in a mechanical manner, by routine, and by the mere exercise of memory without proper understanding of, or reflection upon, the matter in question” (OED online resource). It is my experience that some teachers who use the CLC still set learning homework for their students which is invariably in the format of learning a piece of grammar by rote, after the details of the grammar have been presented to them.

When students first learn Latin they are often told that a verb appears at the end of the sentence. However, telling students to look for the verb can generate problems if a student does not recognise the verb due to its stem form, ending or position in the sentence. Grammar and vocabulary are often learnt as separate elements of the

Latin language, particularly in the early stages of studying Latin; from my experience, teachers will either set a vocabulary learning homework or a grammar learning homework but rarely something which combines both and which highlights the wider application of vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary and grammar come together when students encounter principal parts of verbs, which are introduced in the CLC (minus the supine) in Stage 13 (Book 2). In my observations, I have noted that it takes time for students to adjust to this change and it is common for teachers to have to revise their meanings in successive lessons.

Difficulties arise because pupils have to focus on both the vocabulary of the word and the grammatical function of each part. Generally speaking, when learning noun and verb endings a paradigm word is provided onto which the endings are joined. Some students are able to recognise the tense endings of verbs, but may not have focused on the vocabulary of the word to identify the meaning of a verb which has changed its stem. They may spend fruitless time looking up the 'wrong' part of the verb since they cannot connect the grammar learning to vocabulary learning.

Many students who have learnt noun and verb endings by rote can recall the endings with relative ease, but they might not be able to translate a tense when seeing it outside of the context of the pattern of endings. The most common difficulty in the recall testing of rote-learnt grammar is that students may consistently perform well without necessarily understanding what they are learning. By using isolated 'recall' tests, teachers may find it more difficult to identify problems in understanding. Students are also often conditioned to recall testing, and may have become adept at tailoring their learning style to these tests.

It is interesting that this style of testing is prevalent in secondary schooling since the GCSE and A Level examinations require no such recall of information. At GCSE, the Latin unseen contains words from the prescribed vocabulary and constructions from the prescribed grammar. An argument for learning grammar by rote might be that students who can identify 'sign-post' words will be able to spot constructions easily in an extended passage of Latin. The grammatical expectations of the GCSE are fairly traditional up to a point, but students who have little experience in the manipulation

of vocabulary in relation to grammatical constructions may struggle with the unseen translation. Both this and the literature papers appear to be designed to test students beyond their recall abilities and towards their skills of analysis.

Section 1: Literature Review

There was little dispute in the literature that learning grammar is important to any language, even though language learning strategies have undergone many evolutions since the 1960s, from which Latin has not been exempt. A starting point was to explore students' attitudes to languages and grammar, since fundamental shifts in students' requirements have necessitated many of the changes implemented in teaching practices. Some of the research into grammar teaching and learning comes from studies of university students. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps it is an indication of the central importance given to the manipulation and use of language in order to communicate and read texts. This is a test of the effectiveness of students' grammatical learning which is not so readily applicable to secondary school students; at GCSE and A Level, pupils are often reading texts chosen to challenge pupils so that help from the teacher is necessary in most cases, even when the text is presented in an abridged form.

(a) Students' approaches to grammar in Latin and Modern Foreign Languages

The numbers of schools offering Latin have decreased over the last few generations (20.4% of UK schools offer some Latin to some pupils; CSCP), and the numbers of pupils taking Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at GCSE have also fallen in recent years. This decline was first noticed at A Level: entries were "at their peak in 1992" and have been in decline since (Fisher, 2001, p. 33). In Fisher's study of Year 11 comprehensive school students, one of the key findings was that even high-achievers felt insecure about their ability in MFL. Several pupils mentioned that they liked to get things right, and their insecurity in MFL stemmed from the fact they were more likely to get things wrong (Fisher, 2001). This has implications for Latin where

emphasis is often placed on precision in translation, and on learning in order to 'get things right'.

It was clear from Fisher's study that the requirement to know a range of grammatical terms was the "least enjoyable and most difficult to grasp" (Fisher, 2001, p. 36). Despite this, some A Level linguists said that they had not studied enough grammar earlier on in their MFL careers, and for some a lack of grammatical understanding of English hindered their understanding.

Students indicated that translation was a satisfying activity (Fisher, 2001). This is particularly interesting since more emphasis has been given to communication in MFL since the introduction of GCSEs in 1985. By comparison, translating Latin into English receives mixed views from pupils, and Jessop (2007) found this was the least popular mode of testing in her research on vocabulary acquisition. This finding in itself is interesting given the propensity for the GCSE examination to test knowledge of Latin in this way.

(b) Research into grammar learning and application in Classics

As Glau (1993) notes, in the early ages of grammar teaching, students were considered to be "passive recipients who could learn to use the language properly only if they first had the rules of that language drilled into them" (p. 418) which is a view that persists for some teachers today. This 'rules first, understanding second' approach is entirely selfish for the teacher (Glau, 1993) since it can take a sense of control away from the students who generally lack the ability to use the information they have toiled over learning. Glau (1993) argues that traditional Latin teaching programmes are the sources of this approach of rote memorisation in language learning.

Rote-learning of grammar

Grammar textbooks of the past have relied on rote memorisation of grammar and basic drills to 'test' understanding (Glau, 1993); students were seen as deficient if they could not write properly, and the way to solve this was by making them learn

grammatical rules (Glau, 1993). Testing was done on the basis of writing out these rules. The effect was that students could “recite grammatical rules or the spellings of some words by rote, but had no idea of how the rules functioned” (Glau, 1993, p. 425). Rote learning did not then produce students with linguistic ability.

Learning Latin grammar in relation to MFL and English grammar

One of the reasons for studying Latin is often said to be its ability to help with MFL. Carpenter (2000) refers to these as “secondary benefits” of the language (p. 393), but derivatives found in MFL and English are often used as methods by which to learn Latin grammar. Teachers often teach from what we assume is a reliable point of reference for our pupils; this takes for granted, sometimes unwisely, that they have a wide vocabulary in their native language and will have been exposed to MFL more widely than Latin. However, Latin must be learnt for itself as “if the benefits of language learning will not transfer from one skill to another within a language, how much less will transfer more widely?” (Carpenter, 2000, p. 393). Often elements of Latin grammar have no reference point to the English grammar which children in this age group (Year 9) know. This is the case with principal parts of verbs, and it could be argued that rote memorisation is important as it encourages pupils to become familiar with an element of Latin which has no reference point in English or MFL.

The effect of educational theories on the goals of teaching and learning Latin

The period of change in Latin teaching occurred in the 1970s with the publication of the *Cambridge Latin Course* (CLC) (1970) and *Ecce Romani* (1971); changes to the secondary school system meant that Latin needed to appeal to a wider range of abilities and enthusiasm (Gay, in Moorwood, 2003).

Teaching and curriculum content was also being influenced by educational philosophies from the 1960s and 70s in which more emphasis was being placed on the communicative and behavioural aspects of MFL teaching; Latin moved with this with the CLC (Sharwood-Smith, 1977) in which grammar was embedded within other material (Gay, in Moorwood, 2003, p. 78). Competence in the ways in which students communicate in the Latin language might therefore be demonstrated by their recognition and *use* of grammar rather than by their recall of it; this goes some

way to answer the question posed by Hoover (2000) as to how communicative competence might be measured in Latin.

Learning Latin to read Latin

Carpenter (2000) says that the central goal of learning Latin should be the development of an ability to read and understand texts in the original language. He notes that a general problem is that many Classics students arriving at university will have difficulty as they lack training in basic grammar and terminology and are unlikely to learn enough of the language to be able to read Latin with any fluency. There is often a limited timetable at secondary school in which pupils learn Latin. Thus secondary schools need to address what the best methods are for teaching grammar and effective learning.

The purpose of Latin reading courses such as the CLC is to encourage the application of grammatical points which have been inferred through reading Latin to translating Latin. Carpenter (2000) cites the *Oxford Latin Course* as “avoiding the traditional problem of Latin pedagogy: large swathes of rote-memorized, poorly understood, and seldom used paradigmatic information” (Carpenter, 2000, p. 395).

(c) Research in other languages into grammar learning and application

Glau (1993) notes that “the system of Latin grammar seems to have been imposed on the English language” (p. 421), and notions associated with teaching Classical languages still pervade education. More recently, many of the educational theories which have influenced changing attitudes to Latin teaching are common to MFL teaching. In particular, the discussions of the benefits and problems of inductive and deductive grammar learning are pertinent to my research.

Rote learning of grammar

In 1960s and 1970s, MFL learning was characterised by intensive drilling and error elimination (Grenfell, 1997), and even ESL teaching was dominated by habit-forming exercises (Celce-Murica, 1991). Students who had learnt grammar by rote were

often not often consciously aware of what they had learned unless the teacher explicitly provided them with the wording to describe the point (Shaffer, 1989).

Developments in MFL teaching

The most obvious shift has been from grammar-based textbooks to communicative language teaching more readily associated with the GCSE course (Grenfell, 1997). Jean Piaget had begun in 1923 to explore cognitive development in children; he argued that the brain is not a passive receptacle but an active organising and directing system (as cited in Shaffer, 1989).

Research into language learning strategies can be traced to the 1970s and to *The Good Language Learner* (Naiman et al., 1978). Naiman described a 'good learner' as someone who is active, has technical knowledge of the language, is willing to practise and use the language and who is self-evaluative in seeking meaning (Grenfell, 2007). In the 1980s came the communicative approach which is more prevalent today, with communication as the goal and courses arranged around subject matter rather than grammar (Celce-Murcia, 1991); in the UK, the introduction of the new GCSE played a part in this (Grenfell, 2007).

Communication at the expense of linguistic accuracy

As GCSEs and AS and A2 levels have increasingly placed emphasis on communication in MFL, many teachers have "put the cart before the horse" (Klapper, 1997, p. 27) in teaching and some systematic reinforcement of grammar still common to Latin might be beneficial. Some research has centred around the lack of grammatical accuracy demonstrated by first-year undergraduates in languages in which they have received good A Level grades, and corresponds to Celce-Murica's view that communicative learning environments do not necessarily produce better learners (1991, p. 462). This of course is dependent upon what the students are learning to do, which is in this case to use and manipulate language. In his 1997 paper, Klapper suggests the dominant teaching mode in universities of prose-translation is at odds with school curricula which encourage speaking confidence. Klapper goes on to say that staff in higher education cannot rely on rote-learning techniques of learning grammar since these are no longer appropriate for students

today, who in general are less good at learning than their forerunners or less accustomed to formal learning (Culce-Murica, 1991).

Research also indicates that students learn grammatical constructions in “a steady learning curve, characterised by inference from and interaction with other constructions” (Klapper, 1997, p. 24). Klapper found that university students learning MFL in this way found it difficult to identify and translate grammar points when seeing them outside of the confines of a set of practice sentences. Secondary school students also seemed to lack confidence with crucial grammatical concepts; these include subject-object, case and word order, all of which are routinely taught by Latin teachers. Having moved from importance, to pariah status and back to importance, grammar is certainly now seen as a component of communicative competence (Culce-Murica, 1991).

(d) Immersion theory in language teaching

The immersion theory of inductive learning, where the students learn by doing and are encouraged to spot linguistic patterns and formula, has evolved from the desire to teach linguistic accuracy which is more readily retained and can be applied to different situations.

Inductive grammar teaching supplemented with detail

In MFL, as with Latin, learning grammar assists in the process of acquiring the language but should not be seen as the ultimate aim (Klapper, 1997). In common with the CLC, MFL and ESL grammar should be seen as part of language rather than something to be learned “as an end in itself” (Culce-Murica, 1991, p. 466). There is no doubt however that reinforcement and practice should not be abandoned since there is “simply no other way” to develop a feel for the structure of language which is effective to communication and manipulation of it (Klapper, 1998, p. 22). The result of this approach to teaching is a ‘good’ language learner; someone who recognises language as a system and who realises that there are different elements such as grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading and writing which aid learning and create the whole language (Grenfell, 2007).

Although “grammatical competence cannot be attained solely or even substantially via decontextualised rote-learning” (Klapper, 1998, p. 25), seeing grammar points in context, ‘drilling’ and practicing them and then re-contextualising them does benefit pupils who want to take languages to a higher level. This drilling is frequently what endures in a Latin classroom. Effective teaching therefore involves accenting formal grammatical accuracy as a goal of language learning, without resorting to rote-learning. In my research, I have attempted see whether rote-learning has any positive influence on contextualised encounters with grammar.

The implications of inductive teaching to Latin

In his study, Carpenter (2000) found that concentration on the traditional “Latin word order method” (p. 394) of translating a sentence was at odds with more recent trends by which students learn to translate by doing (immersion theory). Rather than condemning students to solve puzzles when translating, he argued that we should hone students’ analytical skills. In my experience, much of the grammar learning done in my school is without this goal being emphasised.

By teaching the grammatical rules before introducing examples, grammar is emphasised “at the expense of meaning” (Shaffer, 1989, p. 395). As already discussed in this review, teachers are often more secure with rote-learning as an aid to their own teaching; a study in 1989 by Scott which found that explicit or deductive means of teaching French helped university students to perform better seems to support this. However, these students were accustomed to a traditional (deductive) approach to grammar study and were aware of the short time frame in which they had to learn. For some, the explicit mode of teaching would have served as a review of language they already understood. A clear caveat to the application of these findings to secondary school pupils is that university students are likely to be more motivated and conscious of the high standard of accuracy they need to attain.

The inductive approach treats language learning as a creative and cognitive process, where the students are focused on the construction being learned and are required to formulate it for themselves (Shaffer, 1989). In her study comparing the deductive and inductive approaches of teaching French and Spanish, Shaffer found that

students do better initially when they discover underlying patterns themselves rather than being told them.

This is the approach that has governed the development of the CLC (Story, in Moorwood, 2003). Traditionalists were alarmed by the lack of explanation of grammar in the text book, but the initial feedback from teachers trialling the course was favourable with many commenting on the fluency students developed in reading; if this, as Carpenter (2000) says, is the goal of teaching and learning Latin then it appears the inductive technique has merit.

(e) The impact of assessment on learning

It is widely recognised that assessment procedures have an impact on how curriculum is taught as well as how pupils approach their study and learning (Pennycuick & Murphy, 1988). If the rules of grammar are taught, the monitoring systems necessarily test rules rather than use of language (Glau, 1993). By the early 1960s, testing in English grammar was being altered so that writing was assessed rather than knowledge of the rules; it was discovered that the teaching of formal grammar did not necessarily help students to write better (Glau, 1993).

Often graded tests provide an opportunity for specifying exactly what will be taught and tested, and this is often seen in Latin. Tests which are closely linked to the learning process are common (Pennycuick & Murphy, 1988) but the question arises from the literature already reviewed as to whether recall tests benefit the pupil and their wider use of language or are more a method for the teacher to check their own teaching. In light of the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1985, Pennycuick and Murphy (1985, quoted in 1998) said assessment should include a much wider range of achievements to enhance pupil motivation. The mode of assessment in MFL has changed significantly towards communication, with the result that many pupils are prepared to 'have a go' at speaking (Pennycuick & Murphy, 1988, p. 31).

Whilst motivation for learning is success (Pennycuick & Murphy, 1988), for those who struggle with prescribed language learning poor results can be very disheartening and may reduce their motivation to learn. Culce-Murica (1991) makes

the point that individuals learn in different ways; for some students the type of assessment will not alter the way they learn and for others it will have a dramatic effect. Similarly, Grenfell (2007) points out that not all 'good' language learners use the strategies which teachers might be promoting to their students based on research into efficient learning styles; strategy use depends on cognitive style (Grenfell, 2007).

Pennycook and Murphy (1988) also found that pupils liked being tested at regular intervals as they felt it that learning small doses of language at a time was easier than trying to assimilate a large amount of information which they might forget (p. 45); this finding perhaps goes some way to show why rote-learning and recall testing have persisted.

Section 2: Methodology

In considering how to investigate the effectiveness of learning by rote, I decided to choose principal parts as the test subject because this particularly grammar point was familiar to the pupils already, but they had not been tested on their ability to identify principal parts in a passage of Latin; they were usually set five sets of principal parts to learn and tested by a recall test. Pupils were already practiced at identifying and translating tense endings, infinitives, imperatives and present and past participles, but they had not been tested on this grammar in conjunction with the vocabulary aspect of the principal parts.

In testing this grammar I hoped to generate some experimental data on how students coped with identifying the principal parts in an unfamiliar context, and how far they were able to see principal parts as an element of the wider Latin language and grammar which they had already learned. I also received written and verbal feedback from students about whether they felt able to transfer knowledge learnt for a recall test to an unfamiliar situation.

I studied a class which I was teaching regularly as part of my long PGCE placement as I felt I knew the students and their learning styles well and was sure that the way in which I proposed testing them was unfamiliar. The research resembles a case

study in that it focuses on one class in one school; however, I have also attempted to use the research to ask questions about the effectiveness of this common mode of learning in order to improve my own teaching and promote wider thinking in the students.

The school

The school is a selective mixed private school in Northamptonshire. There are approximately 1090 pupils on the roll, of which one-fifth are day pupils. Latin is compulsory from Year 7 to Year 9, and a high proportion of students continue to GCSE, and from this to AS or A Level Latin or Classical Civilisation. Greek is also offered from Year 8 and at GCSE and A Level.

The class

The class involved in the research is a Year 9 class of 19 pupils; 15 boys and 4 girls. Latin is streamed by ability from Year 9 based on internal examinations and Common Entrance; there is an influx of pupils at this stage from local and national prep schools, and their knowledge of Latin varies a great deal. This class uses the CLC Book 3, although only a small number of the students have studied the previous books. The book is used mainly for translation practice with traditional grammar exercises forming the bulk of the linguistic explanation. Despite the fact that this is a lower tier set, there are some very able linguists.

The research

In advance of the testing period, the students had been tested by recall on blocks of five sets of principal parts. The average marks for the three recall tests taken prior to the research period were 87%, 88% and 96% (see Appendix A). Out of the 19 pupils, 14 achieved an average of over 90% across three tests showing that they were adept at learning for recall tests.

At the start of the research period, students were given a list of principal parts to learn (Appendix B). They were not told how they were going to be tested and were given a week to learn the list.

After a week, the students were given a passage of Latin to translate (Test A, see Appendix C). It contained 13 of the 18 verbs on the list in a variety of different forms, some verbs occurring more than once. The passage was unrelated to any Latin they had seen in the CLC.

Translations in the course of the research were marked to the following criteria:

- Total mark for test. Half marks lost for incorrect case, number, tense, person, or function.
- A separate mark for the meaning of the principal parts. A full mark was awarded for each principal part translated with the correct vocabulary.
- Another separate total for principal parts translated with the correct meaning but incorrect grammatical function.

The reasons for this style of marking are as follows:

- The total mark – indicates the students' overall understanding of Latin.
- The mark for the meaning of the principal parts - indicates how well pupils were able to recognise principal parts in an unfamiliar context.
- The mark showing principal parts translated with the wrong grammatical function - indicates how far students were able to connect grammar to the principal parts.

Test B was issued a week later in the same format (Appendix D). To ensure a certain degree on continuity, Test B was linked in content to Test A. It used nine verbs, some of which were repeated within the test; some but not all had appeared in Test A. The forms of the verbs common to both tests were altered in Test B.

Students were not told to relearn the principal parts, and were not forewarned that they would be tested again. This was done to see how well the students had learnt the principal parts initially and to find out whether pupils could identify their meaning from the context of the passage.

Test C was issued four weeks after Test B and seven weeks after the words had been learnt initially. The students had not been told to relearn the words, nor had they been forewarned of another test. Test C (Appendix E) followed Tests A and B in

format. 15 of the verbs from the initial list were used, some of which were repeated within the test; those used in the previous tests were altered in their form. The aim of having a period between Test A and Test C in which no testing or review took place was to assess the longer-term recall of the students which might indicate the effectiveness of the initial rote-learning.

After the testing period was complete, all students were given a questionnaire asking about their experience of learning principal parts (Appendix K). I hoped to find out whether pupils understood what they were learning as this would have some influence on their ability to use their rote-learning of principal parts in the context of a Latin passage.

In order to gain further insight into the experimental data, I held a discussion with six students about their experiences of learning Latin. The students were chosen according to their academic ability measured by the MidYis test, taken at the start of Year 9. This was to ensure pupils were not singled out by their perceived ability in Latin. I recorded and transcribed the discussion (Appendix L).

Drawbacks of the methodology

The main drawback of this study is that any experimental data collected has limited application to wider teaching. The sample was grouping was very select, being a small class set by ability in a selective school. The range therefore was probably smaller than it would be in a non-selective school.

The attainment of the pupils in each test could have been influenced by factors beyond my control, such as how they were feeling on each day. One pupil (Pupil G) was absent for Test B, which means his results for Test C are perhaps less reliable than for the other students. Another factor to consider is that there may have been some cheating, despite efforts made by myself and my Mentor to guard against this.

The research as a whole relies on the students having thoroughly learnt the principal parts before Test A. The list contained words which had already been tested, which some students may have 'skimmed' before concentrating on the newer words. There are implications in how students approached the learning for Test A for the effectiveness of this type of rote-learning homework; it questions whether it is an

effective means for the students to absorb grammar. The results from the testing also rely on the students not having revised the words between tests.

The students were not made aware of why they were being tested so that their learning and translating was not skewed towards getting the principal parts correct. However, some pupils may have noticed the repeated vocabulary and made extra efforts to translate the verbs correctly. In some cases, pupils may have got the correct meaning of the principal part by guessing from the context which shows there may have been other factors at work in the application of knowledge of principal parts when translating.

The results of the qualitative research hold some caveats. In the discussion students may have biased their responses towards pleasing me, or exaggerated their opinions because of the Dictaphone. The class is generally well motivated, and the ethos of the school as a whole is geared towards academic achievement.

Section 3: Results of the quantitative research

Over the test period, 72% of the words were identified in the passages of Latin and translated with the correct meaning. The best results were for Test A where the average score of words identified correctly was 76%. This dipped for Test B to 60% but then rose again after the break of 4 weeks to 71% of words being translated correctly (see Appendix F).

This appears to show a motivational effect produced by frequency of testing; pupils were motivated to do well in Test A because they had expected a test because they had been set some learning for homework, even if the form of the test was unexpected. Test B was presented only a week later without prior warning and the students had perhaps lost much of the drive of the previous week.

The improved results for Test C reflects the benefit of having a break in testing, during which period little routine recall testing was carried out either. When presented with Test C, much of the novelty of the first test returned. I also told them at this point that the results of the testing would not be held on their school record,

which may have eased the pressure for students who perform less well in test situations.

Which principal parts were recalled with most accuracy?

Only three of the 18 words had an instance where 100% of pupils remembered them: *gero* (given as *gerebat*), *scribo* (*scripsit*) and *dico* (*dixit* and *diceret*). *gero* was the only one of these which appeared in Test A; interestingly, the other words appeared in Test C. Words which scored in the 90s were *sto* (*stabant*), *conspicio* (*conspicere*, *conspexisset* and *conspexit*), *capio* (*ceperat* and *ceperunt*), *intro* (*intranterem* and *intraverant*) and *dico* (*dixerunt*).

Of these seven most recognised words, only *gero* and *scribo* had already been tested before the research period started. However, pupils were already very familiar with the others; *sto* and *intro* were learnt as regular 1st conjugation verbs, *capio* represents the paradigm verb for learning the mixed conjugation and *dico* and *conspicio* are used regularly in the CLC as well as other text books.

The words which were remembered best were those which could also be guessed from the context of the sentence; for example, the students have been trained to look for a 'speaking' verb before speech marks. Words were also remembered from the context in which they were first encountered; *capio* had been looked at fairly recently in the context of a CLC story and all the students were familiar with *gero* in the context of *bellum* as well as its meaning here.

Which principal parts were least well remembered?

The words which scored an accuracy rating of below 50% on their first appearance in the tests were *opprimo* (*oppresserunt*), *peto* (*petivit*), *surgo* (*surrexerunt*) and *ferio* (*ferivit* and *feriebat* in the same test). Identification of *opprimo* and *peto* fell still further in subsequent tests. *opprimo* was the least well remembered word, translated correctly 6% and 5% in Tests B and C respectively. Both *opprimo* and *peto* had appeared in previous recall tests, and *peto* had been encountered many times in CLC stories. *opprimo* was often incorrectly translated as 'to oppress', and had possibly been mis-learnt by pupils who assumed this derivative. *surgo* and *ferio* were

translated with much better accuracy in subsequent tests which I attribute to students obtaining the meaning from the context as well as an increased familiarity.

Some words fared well in Test A but not in subsequent tests. *convenio* suffered a dramatic drop in accuracy from 74% in Test A to 10% in Test C, whilst *pervenio* fell from 79% to 57%. Students often confused these verbs with *venio*, missing the subtle changes to meaning. The context did not help as suitable translations of *venio* gave them a sensible meaning. *conspicio* suffered a similar fall from 98% to 68%; again, pupils got the general sense of the word from the context but had not remembered the specific meaning.

Which forms of the words were remembered best?

Infinitives were most readily remembered with a 97% success rate of correct translations (Appendix G). Next came verbs in the perfect tense which were translated correctly 93% of the time. In third place were perfect passive participles which were translated correctly 92% of the time. It cannot be a coincidence that these three forms come directly from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th principal parts which students had been required to learn.

The verb form translated with the least accuracy was the pluperfect tense with a 37% average. Students often confused the endings with those of the perfect tense and failed to emphasise the difference even when the context and flow of the language demanded it. The imperfect subjunctive and present participle did not fare well either, with 66% and 69% respectively. Their results were skewed by a particularly low result for each, when the context did not necessarily help with the translation. These forms of the verbs were only introduced during the term in which the research took place and students did not give a distinct translation when the forms appeared outside of the context of specific practice sentences.

Results attained by the pupils

Appendix H shows total results for all pupils across the three tests. The three pupils who had the best total marks in Test A were those from the top end of the ability range who have a natural ability with the Latin language. They were also the students whose view of translating was positive from the outset. Students whom I

would have considered to be at the lowest end of the ability range tended to score in the middle to upper half of the marks, whilst the student who achieved the lowest score of 69% would usually have been considered of average ability. Those who did best in Test A continued to perform consistently well across the three tests. The two students (Pupil Q and Pupil R) whose marks dropped most dramatically over the three tests were those whose written work in general veered between good and inaccurate. The testing confirmed that they had not been learning work thoroughly for some time.

In general, a decrease in a student's total percentage was linked to the number of principal parts they could identify correctly (Appendix I). Pupil Q and Pupil R had achieved 94% and 81% accuracy in principal part recall respectively in Test A which then fell significantly in Test B. Pupil Q recorded a dramatic decrease in accuracy to 17%. Pupils who performed well overall did so because they could identify the meanings and grammar of the principal parts with a high degree of accuracy; from this I can conclude that knowledge of verbs is integral to students' success at translating since without this anchor in a sentence they were unable to extract a sensible meaning. It appears that pupils who had learnt the principal parts best did better in all the tests overall.

Correlation between recall testing and translation testing

Pupil Q, whose accuracy in translating principal parts showed the most dramatic drop, had previously achieved an average of 95% over three recall tests of principal parts. Pupil Q also later admitted that he had failed to learn the principal parts well initially, and some explanation is given for this in Section 4.

There was some correlation between accuracy in principal part identification in Test A when compared to the average marks achieved in previous recall tests (Appendix J, Figure (i)). The results from Test A exaggerated the highs and lows revealed by the recall tests. By Test C, the drop in accuracy in recalling principal parts was more dramatic (Appendix J, Figure (ii)). There is some correlation between ability to recall information and to translate; those pupils who did best in the recall tests also had a high average score for the translation tests. Some pupils performed better in the

translation tests, which can be attributed to identifying the meaning from context. Those who were weakest in the recall testing were weakest in the translation testing.

Section 4: Students' experience of learning principal parts

From the answers in the questionnaire (Appendix K) I discovered that 72% of the class understood the meanings and uses of all or most of the principal parts of verbs, and were able to write a few sentences explaining their understanding. 67% said they spent 15 minutes (the homework time allocation) or less on learning principal parts, and 61% 'learned' the words the night or the morning before the test. Recall testing was the most common experience for the pupils, with 89% having always or mostly been tested in this way. A surprising finding was that 55% of the class thought that the translation method of testing was 'very good' or 'good'. By Test C, most pupils were using a combination of remembering the principal parts and getting the meaning from the context. From these findings it would appear pupils were not using long-term rote memorisation to complete recall tests.

The discussion with six of the pupils illuminated these general statistics. I first asked if they had been surprised by their marks. One of the highest ability pupils was not surprised as he usually did well. Pupil Q, who showed the most dramatic drop in marks in the testing, was surprised:

Pupil Q: "I thought I'd done a lot better, 'cos usually, I did get like 20 [referring to recall tests, marked out of 20]. I thought I'd done a lot better."

All of the pupils agreed that **learning principal parts was not in general difficult**. One pupil gave a reason for this:

Pupil K: "What is all this saying about them being hard... it goes 'o', then 'ere', normally 'i' then normally 'um'."

All agreed that they could learn the words, **but the difficulty lay in understanding** what they meant. This came from pupils of both low and high ability:

Pupil B: "Learning's not the hard part, it's *understanding* them."

Pupil A: “I don’t know which one to, like, do... if it’s ‘o’ or something. I don’t get that.”

I went on to explore whether they felt they could identify principal parts that they had learnt when seeing them in the unfamiliar context of a passage of Latin. One pupil who scored in the top three in the testing said that **it was “putting it all together” that made identifying principal parts in an unfamiliar context difficult:**

Pupil D: “...when, like, you learn the principal parts separately... and you learn, like, different nouns and stuff separately... and then the endings and you have to put it all together and everything in a sentence.”

The pupils on the whole did not think they would change their learning strategies for a translation test. The lowest ability pupil said he definitely would not, but three pupils who were more adept linguists made these observations:

Pupil K: “Not the way I learn them, but maybe I’d be a bit more intense about learning them.”

Pupil B: “I’d just learn them better.”

Pupil F: “I’d learn the meaning.”

These comments go some way to reinforce the view in the literature that recall testing is not an effective measure of how well a student understands a language. I found it interesting that all the pupils were very aware that they could do the minimum possible learning to achieve a good mark in a recall test.

Unsurprisingly, **most of the pupils said they preferred recall tests:**

Pupil B: “Because they’re easy.”

This linked to what they were saying earlier about learning words being different from understanding them. They described learning for recall tests as being:

Pupil B: “You just learn...”

Pupil Q: "It's basically learning that *this* means *this* rather than translating a sentence... 'cos you don't have to understand it... you can just learn what it means."

Again, in the same way that they realised they might have to put more effort into learning for a translation test, they also offered the opinion that:

Pupil B: "It's probably not great for you... It's probably better to do them..."
[pointing at translation test]

Pupil K: "Because if you actually want to learn, like, Latin... you would want to do it, like, properly so you could remember it, like, well when you'd finished it."

A discussion followed about how they might learn the meanings of principal parts and the endings at the same time, to help with the process of "putting it all together" described earlier. This suggestion was given by the **lowest ability pupil** in the group:

Pupil A: "In sentences, you could have some sentences..."

Pupil D: "...but not like a whole block of writing..."

Pupil A: "...yeah, just like a few words which make sense together."

Without prompting, three of the pupils then discussed how learning words in context of the wider Latin language might help:

Pupil K: "I know some people not at this school... their teacher will write out a sentence and they have to learn what they mean and obviously the key words inside them... and that's easier than having someone just saying, 'ok, take that book and learn those seven words', because you just go '*descendo, descendere...*' and just do it from reading it, from the visual thing..."

Pupil B: "...and then you just forget it..."

Pupil K: "Yeah, exactly. You probably remember the words better if someone put them into context."

All the pupils agreed that they had done better in Test A because they had been told to learn the words for a test. Most of the pupils agreed that learning grammar was

more difficult than learning vocabulary because there were fewer obvious links to English grammar:

Pupil K: “[Principal parts] are, like, on their own”

Pupil B: “They’re much harder”

The discussion ended with asking them whether the translation tests had helped in their ability to translate Latin generally. The pupils found this method of testing was more useful than recall testing:

Pupil A: “...it was good practice...”

Pupil D: “...you can get practice and you’re, like, putting it all together...”

The most interesting insight gained from this discussion is that pupils were able to identify that the best method of testing was not the easiest to learn for, and that the reason they preferred rote-learning and recall testing was the ease with which they could gain a high mark in a test.

Section 5: Conclusions

The main conclusion I can draw from this study is that rote learning principal parts has a perceptible effect on familiarisation with the *vocabulary* of verbs more than on the *standard of accuracy* of English translation from Latin.

The pupils who benefitted most from rote learning were those who had a secure grasp of Latin grammar and who could connect their learning of the principal parts to the verb forms they saw in the Latin passage. Some pupils were able to do this in Test A but in some cases Test B indicated that they were relying on short-term memory recall for Test A; by not being able to recognise the principal parts in Test B their overall attainment dropped. Going on pupil comments in the discussion, the reason some pupils achieved a much better mark in Test C than in Test B could be due in part to having more practice in translation tests. They were more able to recognise the verbs from having a repeated exposure to them over the course of three tests. This is perhaps one of the key elements of learning; pupils were

meetings these words again and again in different forms rather than just once in the set form as they might otherwise in a recall test.

To a large extent, the pupils appear to be aware that rote learning is not the ideal method for retaining information but continue to learn in this manner because it is a **quick and simple way** of gaining high marks in recall tests; the pupils are aware that they only need the words for short-term application. There is perhaps an opportunity being missed by teachers in failing to regularly employ different types of testing. Many teachers must be aware that some pupils will do the minimum amount of work required for the best result, particularly in a high-achieving environment like the research school. The pressures on a teacher's time mean that quick regular checks are more likely to occur than regular translation papers, but that this ultimately does not serve the teacher well as more time may have to be spent later on revising words and grammar which have ostensibly already been learnt.

Pupils were aware too that **understanding was not necessary for rote learning**, and said that a translation test was better at promoting understanding. The higher ability pupils said they would spend longer learning the words if they knew they were going to be tested in this manner; possibly this is because they were the most driven to succeed.

The main problem with rote learning of principal parts is that it disconnects the verbs from their endings, tenses and other forms; the pupils said the biggest obstacle in a translation test was "putting it all together". These comments were drawn from the **higher and lower ability pupils**, and there is clear potential here for teachers to spend more time in lessons putting verb principal parts into context and giving more opportunities for pupils to manipulate principal parts of the verbs they have been asked to learn by putting them into different forms. The suggestions for increasing understanding of principal parts came from the three students of the **lowest general academic ability**, who suggested learning verbs within the context of a Latin sentence.

Teachers could help both high and low ability pupils with their accuracy in translation by spending more time in class explaining what pupils are being asked to learn and why, and by putting this learning into the context of the Latin language as a whole. If

the main aim of studying Latin is for students to increase their ability to read the original language then as teachers we ought to keep all learning within a context which can be readily applied to unfamiliar situations at a later date.

Possible areas for further work

It would be interesting to widen the scope of this research by applying it to a school with students with a wider range of ability. The pupils I spoke to all appeared to find the act of rote-learning easy, and it would be interesting to see if there was a greater difference between marks in a recall test and translation test for pupils for whom rote-learning was difficult.

One of the main questions presented by my findings is how teachers can teach manipulation of language alongside memorisation, pulling together the different strands of vocabulary and grammar. As the pupils themselves suggested, presenting the words and grammar to be learned in Latin sentences might help to unite these elements of language. There is also a great deal of potential to be gained by the teacher modelling the different ways that principal parts are used and writing examples of verb morphology on the board. Again, it would be interesting to see how lower ability pupils would react to this as being a routine part of testing or lessons.

Methods of testing also need to be explored further, since these appear to have a direct influence on how pupils learn. It would be interesting to investigate whether Latin teaching could survive without rote-learning and recall testing. On the one hand, Fisher's research found that students were put off languages because the grammatical terms were hard to grasp (page 5); on the other, Klapper promoted the drilling of grammar combined with a contextualisation of it in order to ensure pupils had a sound grounding in language before reaching higher levels of learning (page 11). If, as I found, even higher ability pupils rote-learn without necessarily understanding, it begs the question of whether teachers are failing all and especially lower ability pupils by setting regular recall-style tests. There are tensions here too: Pennycuik and Murphy found that pupils liked regular testing as they felt it was more manageable (page 13), yet perhaps they only find it more manageable because they do not need to put as much time or effort into learning. It would benefit

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students starting Latin and those taking GCSEs and A Levels if some investigation were done into specific modes of testing Latin grammar.

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Appendix A

Results for each pupil in three recall tests conducted before the research testing period. Pupils were tested on sets of five verbs and their principal parts.

Pupil	Recall 1 %	Recall 2 %	Recall 3 %	Average %
A	95	100	66	87
B	100	100	96	99
C	90	80	100	90
D	85	95	95	92
E	95	100	100	98
F	85	100	100	95
G	90	90	95	92
H	70	95	100	88
I	85	85	100	90
J	95	90	100	95
K	70	83	100	84
L	90	100	100	97
M	95	100	100	98
N	86	93	100	93
O	90		80	85
P	85	100	100	95
Q	95	90	100	95
R	58	75	83	72
S	95	100	100	98
Mean	87	93	96	92

Appendix B

List of principal parts issued to students at the start of the research period. Some of the words had already been learnt and tested, some were familiar but had not been formally tested and others were new to the students

Already learnt:

eo, ire, ii, itum	I go
sum, esse, fui	I am (to be)
gero, gerere, gessi, gestum	I wear
intellego, intellegere, intellexi, intellectum	I understand
occido, occidere, occidi, occisum	I kill
opprimo, opprimere, oppressi, oppressum	I overwhelm
peto, petere, petivi, petitum	I seek, make for
scribo, scribere, scripsi, scriptum	I write
surgo, surgere, surrexi, surrectum	I rise, get up

New principal parts to learn:

capio, capere, cepi, captum	I capture (I have an idea)
conspicio, conspicerere, conspexi, conspectum	I catch sight of
convenio, convenire, conveni, conventum	I gather
dico, dicere, dixi, dictum	I say
discedo, discedere, discessi, discessum	I leave, depart
ferio, ferire, ferivi, feritum	I strike, hit
intro, intrare, intravi, intratum	I enter
pervenio, pervenire, perveni, perventum	I reach, arrive
sto, stare, steti, statum	I stand

Appendix C

Test A

Pupils completed the translation in test conditions.

A young man leaves his home in the countryside to go to Rome, where he sees some unexpected events.

iuvenis erat, nomine Marcus, qui rure discessit quod Romam videre volebat. cum Romam pervenisset, laetissimus erat; sibi placebat inter aedifica ambulare et Romanos praeclaros conspicerere.

olim, cum Marcus multitudinem hominum conspexisset stantem pro theatro Pompeii, intellegere voluit cur homines convenirent. itaque Marcus, qui consilium ceperat, petivit primum ordinem, unde omnia videre poterat. senatores et aliqui viri in theatrum ibant. deinde Marcus conspexit Gaium Iulium Caesarem cum magistratibus theatrum intrantem. togam purpuream gerebat, et omnes senatores surrexerunt Caesaremque salutaverunt.

Vocabulary:

iuvenis, iuvenis (m) – young man

rus, ruris (n) – the countryside

Roma, ae (f) – Rome

sibi placebat – it was pleasing for him (e.g. he liked to...)

inter (+ acc) – between

praeclarus, a, um – distinguished, important

olim – once upon a time

multitudo, multitudinis (f) – a crowd

homo, hominis (m) – man

Pompeius, Pompeii (m) – Pompey, a famous Roman general

itaque – therefore

consilium, i (n) – a plan

primus, a, um - front

ordo, ordinis (m) – line, row

aliqui, aliquae, aliquod – some other

vir, viri (m) – man

Gaius Iulius Caesar – Gaius Julius Caesar, at that point the leader of the Romans

magistratus, us (m) – official, magistrate

toga, ae (f) – toga

purpureus, a, um – purple

Appendix D

Test B

This was given to students 2 weeks after the initial principal part learning had been set.

A young man, Marcus, who has come from the countryside to Rome has witnessed a great crowd of men gathering around the Theatre of Pompey to see Julius Caesar.

cum Caesar medium theatri peteret, senatores circum eum steterunt. subito surgens, unus senator togam Caesaris tenuit et alius senator eum pugione ferivit. tertius bracchium Caesaris feriebat. cum Caesar surgere temptaret, senatores cum pugionibus eum oppresserunt. Caesar, a senatoribus occisus, non iterum surrexit.

senatores a theatro discesserunt cum Caesarem occidissent, et corpus Caesaris iacens ante magnam statuam reliquerunt. senatores ad populum cucurrerunt et dixerunt, 'mortuus est Caesar! populum Romanum liberavimus!'

Vocabulary:

medium, i (n) - centre
circum (+acc) – around
teneo, tenere, tenui, tentus – to hold
alius, a, um – another
pugio, pugionis (m) – dagger
tertius, a, um - third
bracchium, i (n) – arm
tempto, temptare, temptavi, temptatum – to try
iterum - again
corpus, corporis (n) - body
iaceo, iacere, iacui – to lie dead
relinquo, relinquere, reliqui, relictum – to leave
populus, i (n) – the people
curro, currere, cucurri, cursum – to run
libero, liberare, liberavi, liberatum - to free

Appendix E

Test C

This was given to the pupils 7 weeks after the initial principal part learning was set, and after a 4 week gap in which no testing of the principal parts was conducted.

Marcus, who is staying in Rome, has just witnessed the brutal stabbing of Julius Caesar by a group of senators.

cum senatores Caesarem occidissent, ferientes Caesarem cum pugionibus, omnes cives taciti stabant. Marcus, surgens, forum discessit. cum Marcus villam pervenisset, constituit amicos convenire quod anxius erat de morte Caesaris.

ubi amici villam intraverant, Marcus omnia dixit. cum verba senatorum diceret – “populum Romanum liberavimus!” – amici anhelaverunt. conspiciens unum amicum, Marcus eum rogavit cur verba eum opprimerent. amicus inquit, “respublica in magno periculo est. sine dubio, Caesare occiso, senatores animas populorum ceperunt.” subito Marcus iit ad mensam et epistulam ad patrem scripsit.

Vocabulary:

senator, senatoris (m) - senator

Caesar, Caesaris (m) – Caesar

pugio, pugionis (m) – dagger

tacitus, a, um – silent

constituo, constituere, constitui, constitutum – to decide

anxius, a, um – worried or anxious

de (+ ablative) – about

verbum, verbi (n) - word

populus, i (n) – the people

libero, liberare, liberavi, liberatum - to free

anhele, anhelare, anhelavi, anhelatum – to gasp

rogo, rogare, rogavi, rogatum – to ask

respublica, reipublicae (f) – the republic

periculum, i (n) – danger

sine dubio – without doubt

anima, animae (f) – mind

mensa, mensae (f) – table

Appendix F

Results from Tests A, B and C showing the percentage of times principal parts were identified and their meaning translated correctly. From this one can gauge the relative familiarity of one work over a period of time.

PP	% correct translations per verb form			
	Test A %	Test B %	Test C %	Average %
eo, ire, ii, itum	53		84	69
sum, esse, fui	84		79	82
gero	100			100
intellego	74			74
occido		67	76	72
opprimo		6	5	6
peto	47	28		38
scribo			100	100
surgo	32	61	53	49
capio	95		95	95
conspicio	98		68	83
convenio	74		10	42
dico		94	100	97
discedo	74	83	79	79
ferio		50	68	59
intro	95		95	95
pervenio	79		57	68
sto	89	89	95	91
Mean	76	60	71	72

Appendix G

Results from Tests A, B and C showing the percentage of times the different forms of the verbs were translated correctly.

% correct identifications per verb form

Part of verb	Test A %	Test B %	Test C %	Average %
Present			84	84
Imperfect	98	67	63	76
Perfect	93	92	94	93
Pluperfect	58		16	37
Infinitive	92	100	100	97
Imperfect Subj	63	83	53	66
Pluperfect Subj	68	78	79	75
Present Participle	76	61	70	69
PPP		100	84	92
Mean	78	83	71	77

Appendix H

Total percentage marks achieved by each pupil in each test.

Pupil	Test A %	Test B %	Test C %	Average %
A	76	74	73	74
B	89	84	83	85
C	90	83	88	87
D	94	95	86	92
E	86	92	89	89
F	91	93	86	90
G	91		76	84
H	90	82	71	81
I	91	88	88	89
J	90	86	84	87
K	91	86	85	87
L	95	93	88	92
M	89	86	93	89
N	69	74	78	74
O	97	91	92	93
P	95	89	86	90
Q	86	71	66	74
R	87	86	63	79
S	91	86	88	88
Mean	89	86	82	86

Appendix I

Percentage of accurate principal part recall per pupil per test. Particularly low marks are highlighted and commented upon in the examination of the data.

Pupil	Test A pp%	Test B pp%	Test C pp%	Average %
A	63	25	81	56
B	81	75	78	78
C	81	42	78	67
D	81	92	78	84
E	94	100	89	94
F	81	75	72	76
G	94		67	81
H	75	42	56	58
I	81	92	78	84
J	69	67	72	69
K	94	58	83	78
L	94	75	72	80
M	81	67	89	79
N	69	33	61	54
O	94	67	94	85
P	81	50	72	68
Q	94	17	50	54
R	81	58	53	64
S	75	75	89	80
Mean	82	62	74	73

Appendix J

Graphs mapping the correlation between marks attained in recall testing and in translation testing for each pupil.

Figure (i)

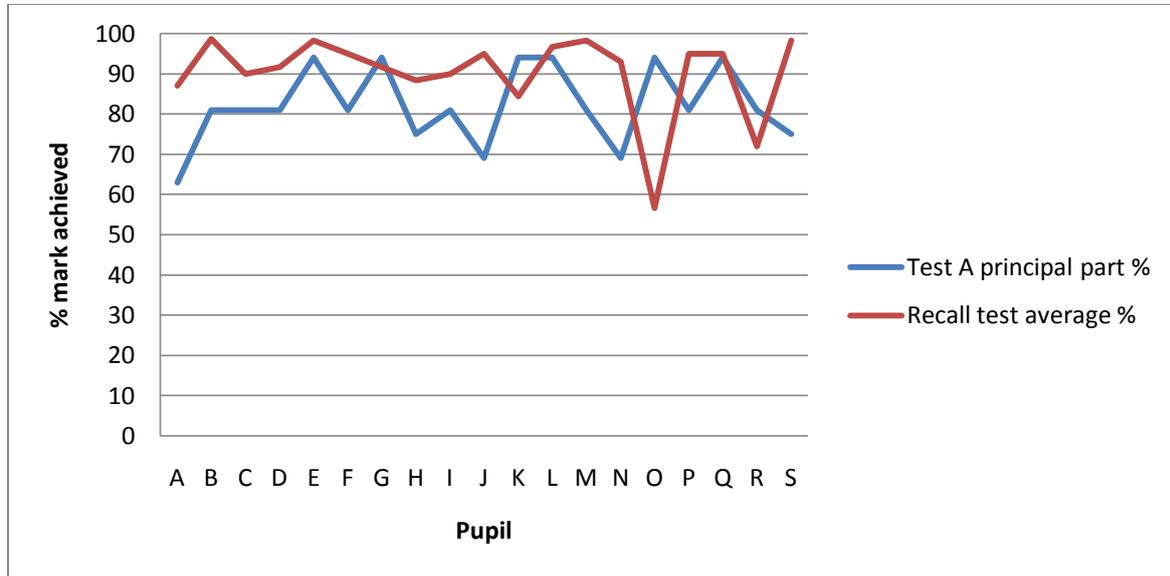
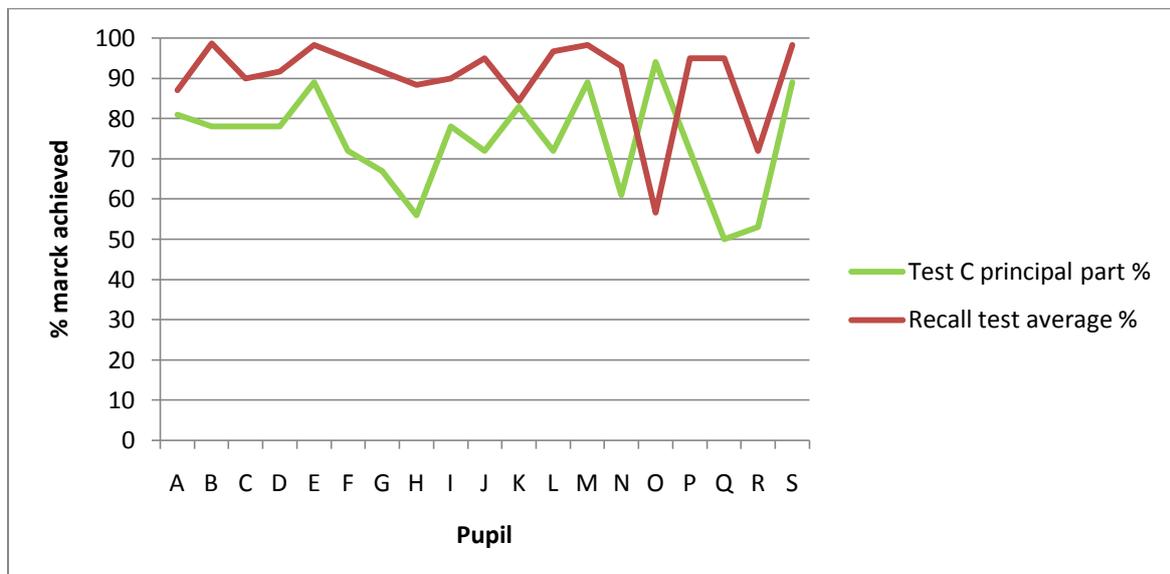


Figure (ii)



Appendix K

Collated answers to questions posed in a questionnaire issued to all students.

1. Principal parts - understand? % of class						
Yes	Most	Some	No			
39	33	22	6			
2. How much time spent learning? %						
> 15 mins	15 mins	< 15 mins				
33	22	45				
3. When do you learn? % of class						
Day set	Bit each day	Nigh before	Morning of	Few mins before		
17	22	44	11	6		
4. Latin testing - recall tests? % of class						
Always	Mostly	Rarely	Never			
22	67	11	0			
5. How do you feel about trans testing? 5 = very good, 1 = bad. % of class						
5	4	3	2	1		
11	44	17	22	6		
6. How do you feel about recall tests? %						
Like	Ok	Don't like	Other			
22	56	17	0			

Appendix L

Transcript of discussion held with six pupils. Each pupil can be identified in the results of Appendices H and I by their letter given here.

Interviewer: Ok so these are the three tests which you had, which were focusing on various bits of Latin. Now, you had that list of principal parts to learn... Look at your marks for each test. Are you surprised by your marks?

Pupil B: Err, yeah I am.

Pupil K: Mine are all the same, like, I got 73 out of 80 then I got 62 out of 70 which is kind of the same and then I got... oh well, yeah, that one doesn't count, but the first two were pretty much the same mark.

Interviewer: So does that surprise you?

Pupil K: Well I did really well in that other one we did [referring to a marked translation passage done in the previous term], like 33 out of 35.

Pupil Q: I thought I'd done a lot better, 'cos usually, I did get like 20 [referring to recall tests, marked out of 20]. I thought I'd done a lot better.

Interviewer: Ok, what about you Pupil B, you were saying you did worse...

Pupil B: No, I thought I'd've done worse...

Interviewer: Oh, you thought you would have done worse... What about you Pupil F, were you surprised by your results?

Pupil F: Err, no not really.

Interviewer: So in terms of if you're surprised by your results, is that because you usually find it hard to learn principal parts?

Pupil D and Pupil A: Yes.

Pupil K: No! What is all this saying about them being hard...

Pupil Q: It's because I don't know them, I don't know them.

Pupil D: Principal parts aren't difficult its just...

Pupil K: ...it goes 'o', 'ere', normally 'i' then normally 'um'.

Interviewer: Pupil K, you seem to find principal parts quite easy then...

Pupil K: Well, I don't normally learn them in like loads and loads of great detail but like they're not that difficult to just learn.

Interviewer: Ok... What about you Pupil B?

Pupil B: Learning's not the hard part, its *understanding* them.

Pupil Q: Yeah, I agree too.

Interviewer: Ah ok.

Pupil A: I don't know which one to, like, do... if its 'o' or something. I don't get that.

Interviewer: Ok, so if you've managed to learn all the principal parts and you've managed to learn all the endings and things like that but then you get them in an unfamiliar context like this...

Pupil D: Yeah, it's putting it all together...

Interviewer: So putting it together is the hard thing. What do you mean by putting it together?

Pupil D: Erm, when like you learn the principal parts separately... and you learn like different nouns and stuff separately and then the endings and you have to put it all together and everything in a sentence.

Interviewer: Ok, so that's what you find tricky. Would you change the way you learn principal parts if you knew you were getting a translation test like this?

Pupil A: No...

Pupil K: Not the way I learn them, but maybe I'd be a bit more intense about learning them.

Pupil B: I'd just learn them better.

Pupil F: I'd learn the meaning.

Interviewer: You'd just learn the meaning Pupil F rather than looking at the different bits?

Pupil F: Yeah... because that's all you need really for translating.

Interviewer: So what about with other types of grammar that you learn? Most of you said in your questionnaires said that you always get, or you generally get the kind of tests where you just have to regurgitate what you know.

Pupil B: I like that.

Interviewer: Why do you like those tests?

Pupil B: Because they're easy.

Pupil A: Yeah, they're easy.

Interviewer: Why are they easy?

Pupil B: Because you just learn...

Pupil Q: It's basically learning that *this* means *this* rather than translating a sentence.

Interviewer: Ok, so this word equals this is a lot easier?

Pupil F: Yeah, than having to understand it...

Pupil Q: Yeah, 'cos you don't have to understand it you can just learn what it means.

Interviewer: Ah, I see. So that's 3 of you, no 4 of you who when you're just learning and then regurgitating, you don't need to understand – you just learn.

Pupil D, Pupil A, Pupil Q: Yeah...

Pupil B: It's probably not that great for you... It's probably better to do them [pointing at translation test], but it's harder.

Pupil K: Yeah, because if you don't actually understand what you're doing then there's no point in really doing it. Because if you actually want to learn, like, Latin... I'm not doing it for GCSE, but you did want to do it properly, then you would have to like do it... you would want to do it like properly so you could remember it like well when you finished it.

Interviewer: Ok...

Pupil K: because you would have to get to a stage where you do it, like, well....

Interviewer: What about with other subjects? Are there other subjects where you just have to learn something and regurgitate it without understanding it?

Pupil F: Other languages...

Pupil D: Maths. You don't have to like understand anything...

Pupil B: But if I understand something I find it a lot easier to learn.

[Chorus of agreement]

Pupil B: When it's like listed like grammar.

Interviewer: If you understood principal parts a bit better, for example, do you think you'd find them easier to learn? Or easier to use when translating Latin?

Pupil B: Well no, because with learning like the listed things you generally just read it, you generally just read it and memorise it. But it's when I'm revising stuff – if I don't understand it there's just no point.

Pupil Q: One thing that I find hard is remembering every single different ending.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Pupil Q: Every single tense, and like the masculine, feminine, neuter bits.

Interviewer: Does that mean if you learn the principal parts and see them in a translation like this, you might be able to get the vocabulary and the meanings but not the ending right.

Pupil Q: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you think of anyway you could combine learning endings and vocabulary at the same time?

Pupil A: In sentences, you could have some sentences

Pupil D: But not like a whole block of writing...

Pupil A: Yeah, just like a few words which make sense together.

Pupil K: I know some people not at this school who learn Latin like not in a vocab book... their teacher will write out a sentence and they have to learn what they mean and obviously the key words inside them, and that's easier than having someone just saying, 'ok, take that book and learn those seven words', because you just go '*descendo, descendere...*' and just do it from reading it, from the visual thing...

Pupil B: And then you just forget it...

Pupil D: Yeah.

Pupil K: Yeah, exactly. You probably remember the words better if someone put them into context.

[Chorus of agreement]

Interviewer: OK, that's interesting that seeing things in context makes them easier to remember.

[Agreement]

Interviewer: What about with these translation tests... What I found interesting was that pretty much everyone in the class did better in the 3rd test than in the second test.

Pupil A: Yeah, I did really badly in the second test.

Interviewer: But would you all agree that you did best in the first test?

Pupil Q: Yeah, because I remember you said learn these words before the first test, so I learnt the words... and then you didn't say that for the second or the third so I didn't really learn them.

Pupil K: I did worst in my last.

Pupil D: Same.

Pupil F: I did better in my second than in my first...

Pupil Q: but he's Italian so it doesn't matter...

Pupil K: Yeah because its almost his own language.

Interviewer: Pupil F, when you're learning do you liken Latin to Italian?

Pupil F: Yeah...

Interviewer: Does that make it easier to learn Latin?

Pupil F: Yeah because I know Italian better than Latin so I link it to something I know better... it makes it more familiar...

Interviewer: What about the rest of you, do you ever link English to Latin to make it more familiar?

Pupil D: A little bit.

Pupil B: Loads.

Pupil K: Yeah, like *ambulo*, like ambulance...

Pupil A: But only when it's really obvious, it only works then.

Pupil K: Or when it's something silly, like sending mittens in the post for *mitto*...

Pupil Q: Yeah, only when it's really obvious

Interviewer: So what about principal parts? Can you find a way to link the grammar side of it to English?

Pupil D: No, it doesn't work.

Interviewer: Is that because there is nothing to link them to in English?

Pupil K: They're, like, on their own.

Pupil B: They're much harder.

Pupil A: But I'm not going on to GCSE so it doesn't matter.

Pupil Q: The reason I'm not doing it at GCSE is because, well I know it helps and everything, but you might as well learn French because French is easier.

Interviewer: Do you think doing these translation tests – and I think you've done more translation tests in the last 6 weeks than you have in the last year...

Pupil Q: Than in my life...

Interviewer: Do you think they've helped in your ability to translate Latin generally?

Pupil A: Yeah, because it was good practice.

Pupil Q: Yeah...

Interviewer: Why has it helped you?

Pupil B: It just has...

Interviewer: Can you explain a bit more?

Pupil D: Because you get practice and you're, like, putting it all together...

Pupil K: It's all about practice.