Variations on a Theme:
An Experiment in Latin Prose Composition

Jeffrey Beneker
Department of Classics
University of Wisconsin, Madison

In this paper I discuss a technique for incorporating prose composition into a first-year Latin course. Inspired by Mary Davisson's "Alternative Approach,"[1] this technique requires each student to create an original composition, in stages, over the course of a semester or a year. The goals of the exercise are to encourage beginning students to engage actively with the complexities of Latin grammar in an individual way and to develop an appreciation for the intersection of "form and function" in the language.[2] Before describing the assignments in detail, I would like to explain the motivation that lay behind its creation.

I am a member of the camp that believes that composition is beneficial to students of elementary and intermediate Latin.[3] My own experience as a student tells me that writing is helpful, but as a teacher I found myself assigning composition exercises unimaginatively, almost out of habit. While teaching in graduate school, I followed a common syllabus that included the regular translation of short English sentences into Latin. When I began teaching first-year Latin at a university, I dutifully required that the students translate the four English sentences found in each chapter of the textbook. I corrected them diligently but found, as the semester wore on, that many of the students seemed to be making the same mistakes in composition after composition, and for those few who did improve, their progress was much more gradual than I would have liked. This was true despite the fact that I was very thorough in my written comments and regularly devoted class time to working through the translations. It seemed to me that the students were divided into two groups: those who showed an aptitude for composition and were able to write good Latin sentences, and those who never seemed to develop the knack for writing. These groups remained essentially static for the duration of the course. Moreover, there appeared to be a correlation between the abilities to read and to write, and the students who had the weakest reading skills also had the most difficulty composing. Latin composition, as I was using it, was more a tool for exposing weakness than for improving a student's language skills.

While planning another year of first-semester Latin and reflecting on the value of the composition exercises—wondering if they were just a waste of my and the students' time—I ran across Mary Davisson's article. Davisson's technique for teaching composition is

---

[1] M. H. T. Davisson, "Prose Composition in Intermediate Latin: An Alternative Approach," *CJ* 96.1 (2000) 75-80, Reprinted in *CPL Online* 1.1 (2004).

[2] The assignment under discussion is originally based on F. M. Wheelock, R. A. LaFleur, *Wheelock's Latin*, sixth edition (New York 2000), but it could be easily used with any textbook of introductory Latin. Though developed for a college-level course, there is nothing in the nature of the assignment that precludes its use in middle or high school Latin classes.

[3] A critical summary of one debate over prose composition, carried out mainly in the *Classical Journal* in the early 1990s, can be found in A. L. Saunders, "The Value of Latin Prose Composition," *CJ* 88.4 (1993) 385-92.

designed for students at the intermediate level and is comprised of two parts. First she prepares the students for writing in Latin by getting them to think as native speakers would have. She has them compose essays as if they were ancient Romans visiting the modern-day United States and writing in English as a second language. Thus the students are encouraged to imagine and then make Latin-style mistakes, such as neglecting the definite article or placing the verb at the end of the sentence (Davisson 2004, 2-3). Second, she has them compose in Latin by adapting a paragraph from one of their textbooks. The composition is not a single event, however; the students are required to revisit their passages several times, correcting their mistakes and also adding complexity in the form of more sophisticated constructions, such as subordinate clauses with verbs in the subjunctive, participial phrases, or more stylized word order (Davisson 2004, 3-6).

After reading her article, I realized immediately that a major problem with my own method was the lack of a feedback loop: my comments called attention to the students' mistakes but did not allow them to be corrected. My approach was essentially this: the students would translate a few English sentences into Latin and hand them in; I would go over them in class on the same day; then I would write detailed comments on their papers and return them a few days later; finally the students would be assigned a new set of sentences and start the process over. Although the students responded well during the in-class discussions, there was no real incentive for them to look over their homework since each new assignment presented, from their point of view, a new set of problems. And perhaps most important, there was no measurable credit given to the students if they spent time reviewing their old assignments. Most of them were obviously paying little attention to the detailed notes I was writing.

After reading Davisson's article, I decided to adapt her approach for students in beginning Latin, which required that I first clarify my own goals. Davisson wanted her students, who already had a good grasp of Latin grammar, to learn to think like Latin speakers and to add rhetorical and stylistic flourishes to their compositions. I in turn decided to use the compositions primarily to help the students understand the connection between the forms of Latin words and their function in a sentence. A secondary goal was to get them to consider questions of syntax and style. To this end, I replaced her initial, preparatory phase—the English essay written by a fictitious, Latin-speaking, ESL time traveler—with classroom work that focused on analyzing English sentences and translating them into Latin. For the second phase I have my students compose original essays in English using a controlled vocabulary set and then translate the essays into Latin in several stages, correcting past mistakes and adding complexity at each step.

The ability to read and analyze a Latin sentence requires that students first be able to analyze a sentence in their native language, a skill which even college-level students often lack. The primary objective of the first phase, then, is to help students to develop their analytical skills through composition. Each in-class exercise is based on a sentence similar to the following:

Money and glory were conquering the soul of a good man.[4]

---

[4] Wheelock, ch. 5, Practice and Review #15.

The secondary objectives of these phase-one exercises include training students to resist the natural temptation to begin looking up words immediately; trying out false leads or natural inclinations and demonstrating why they don't work (for example, some students will suggest using a form of *esse* in translating the imperfect verb *were conquering*); and spending some time comparing the English and Latin versions of the sentences to make comments about style and word choice.

The first step in analyzing the sentence involves identifying its parts and specifying the forms they would take in Latin. After putting the English sentence on the board, I guide the students as we deconstruct it and record the following information:

Part	Function	Form in Latin
money	Subject	nominative, singular
glory	Subject	nominative, singular
were conquering	Verb	3rd person, plural, imperfect, indicative, active
the soul	Direct Object	accusative, singular
"of a good man"	shows possession	genitive, singular

Next I ask the students to supply the Latin vocabulary required for the translation and then to modify these words according to the forms they identified in the first step. No reference to the textbook is allowed at this point; if the students do not know a vocabulary word immediately, I help them to recall it (saying, e.g., "A synonym for 'to conquer' might be 'to overcome' as in 'to be on top of'") or finally supply it myself after a reasonable number of prompts. Similarly, they must come up with the proper word endings from memory, aided by gentle reminders. We end up with this sort of information on the board:

Vocabulary Word	Form
pecunia, -ae f	pecunia
gloria, -ae f	gloria
supero (1)	superabant
animus, -i m	animum
vir, viri m	viri
bonus, -a, -um	boni

This table in turn yields the following sentence:

pecunia et gloria superabant animum boni viri.

This Latin sentence is technically correct but still very English in its arrangement. Having written it on the board, however, I invite students to suggest how the words might be rearranged so that they reflect more usual Latin style. In this particular case, we could

discuss the position of the verb and whether (and why) a Roman author might write simply "boni" instead of "boni viri."

In this phase students work on the same skills that they will need in reading Latin: identifying the basic elements of the sentence and associating the form of each word with its function. They also acquire a systematic method for attacking compositions, and many students hand in assignments that contain not only the final Latin sentence but also notes that show their analysis of the original English and the steps involved in translating it into Latin. As students become more comfortable with Latin vocabulary and forms, they tend to write briefer notes. But I have found that for beginning students, this sort of formulaic approach makes them much more comfortable with composition and helps them to understand the relationship between English and Latin by setting it out in black and white.

The second phase of the exercise involves work on the actual composition, which students do in an iterative fashion. Davisson's approach has students begin by adapting an existing Latin passage, modifying it by changing the perspective (third- to first-person, for example) or its content. This assignment provides a unique text for the student to manipulate, but it also requires a level of sophistication not yet achieved in the first-semester. Instead, I provide my students with an English-to-Latin vocabulary based on the first eleven chapters of the textbook (the vocabulary for Wheelock, chapters 1-11, is found in the appendix **below**). I selected these chapters because they contain enough forms to write interesting Latin (that is, conjugations 1-4 in the present, future and imperfect tenses, indicative and imperative moods, and active voice; declensions 1-3; the personal and demonstrative pronouns; and various adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions). It also happens that the students are studying Chapter 11 about the time they are required to make their first translation into Latin, and so they are familiar with this set of vocabulary from their reading. The requirements for this assignment are as follows:

> Write a paragraph in English using the vocabulary set that I have provided. The paragraph may be about anything, but it must meet the following criteria:
>
> - It must be five sentences long.
>
> - It must contain at least three different verbs and as many different nouns, adjectives, and adverbs as possible.
>
> - Verbs may be in the present, imperfect, and future tenses only.
>
> - It must contain at least two prepositional phrases.

One weakness of this assignment is that the requirements are too broad. Since I am not specific about the parts of speech other than verbs, the passages tend to come back with only a small variety of nouns and adjectives, few adverbs, and no really "interesting" use of conjunctions. In future editions of this assignment I would experiment with making these instructions more restrictive while still encouraging free composition.

In creating their paragraphs, the students tend to write on similar themes, as these two samples show.[5]

---

[5] Both of these samples are actually composites of several students' work.

<u>Sample 1</u>: The farmer loves the beautiful girl. He gives her presents, but the sailor has money. She gives the sailor kisses while the farmer remains in the field without peace. The farmer cannot possess his love and blames the sailor. He kills the sailor.

<u>Sample 2</u>: The wicked men think that they are able to conquer our country. Our people are strong and have virtue. They will overcome the plots with courage. The evil men will pay the penalty because of their crimes. They will find destruction.

The first sample features by far the most common set of characters found in the students' passages: the girl, the farmer, and the sailor. This selection is undoubtedly influenced by the examples I use in the classroom, since I am drawing from the same pool of vocabulary as the students and our textbook starts us off with these people and occupations. The second sample, however, may actually reflect the thoughts of some of the students. It is derived from an assignment that was due on September 17, 2001, just six days after the attacks on New York and Washington. While I can certainly read the influence of Wheelock's Practice and Review sentences and the *Sententiae Antiquae*, I also detect a bit of the president's post-9/11 speeches and even the thoughts of many Americans at the time. Despite the tragic inspiration, I was glad to see that some students had personalized their writing and would be translating serious ideas into Latin. In any case, at the completion of this assignment, each student has an original essay that he or she may use as a basis for composition in Latin.

Correcting these passages poses a bit of a challenge. On the one hand, as the students move on to translation, I want them to puzzle over tricky phrases and think about how they might be rendered in Latin. On the other hand, they are still new to the language and have been reading fairly basic sentences in the early chapters of the textbook. Too much puzzling would lead to confusion and frustration. Moreover, the goal of the exercise is to help the students to recognize and use the correct forms of words without focusing too much on style. So I often write "simplify" near an overly complex phrase or give leading hints in order to warn that a particular model is too difficult. In this way I hope to assist the students without guiding them directly to the English constructions that are most easily converted to Latin. There is also the issue of constructions that are simply too complicated to be figured out. The first sentence of the second sample is a case in point: the students will not yet have learned how to construct a subordinate clause after a verb of thinking. In cases like this, I usually suggest an alternative phrasing.

Other potential problems I leave unmarked. Referring to the first sample, the student has written "she gives the sailor kisses" instead of "she gives kisses to the sailor." This works fine in English but often causes beginning students to overlook the indirect object and the need for the dative case. Likewise, the more exact form "to the sailor" often causes students to insert a preposition in Latin. I regularly allow students to make and then correct this sort of error when doing oral work in the classroom so that gaps in their knowledge (or simply lapses of memory) may be isolated and then resolved immediately. Since the iterative nature of the writing assignment forces them to revisit their compositions, they will also have the chance to reconsider what they have written incorrectly and to learn the proper forms and constructions by making corrections, guided by my comments. In practice this iteration is not a chore, since most of the students feel a real ownership of their

passages, which in turn gives them the sense that they can control the material and creates a real desire to make an accurate translation.

> The instructions for the first translation are as follows:

> Translate the paragraph that you wrote for Exercise 1 into Latin. We will work on Latin composition in class, and you should employ the techniques that you learn there to this exercise. Keep in mind that you may have to rephrase, rewrite, or in some cases, delete parts of your original English paragraph.

> You should spend a reasonable amount of time on this assignment. You will run into unexpected problems, which will help you to discover certain aspects of Latin grammar. You should attempt to solve these problems as best you can, but don't spend an inordinate amount of time in doing so. You will have the opportunity to revise your translation as the semester progresses.

The next assignment requires the students to respond to my comments and to add features based on more recently learned grammar:

> Review the comments that I made on your first Latin translation (Exercise 2) and make the necessary corrections. In addition, you must add the following elements to your composition. You should add them by modifying existing sentences, adding as little new content as possible.

> New elements:[6]

- At least one verb in the Perfect System.

- At least two nouns and two adjectives from the third declension.

- One relative clause.

This stage may be repeated many times, each iteration requiring a correction of the previous composition and the addition of new elements. Ideally the new grammar would be introduced without adding much new content; for example, the last sentence in the first sample could be converted into a result clause based on the preceding sentence. Once the corrected paragraph is in hand, future assignments might also ask the students to rearrange sentences, add connectives (like *igitur* or *vero*), and make other adjustments so that the passage becomes more cohesive.

The effectiveness of this exercise is of course hard to quantify. As a result of the in-class work of phase one, I observed that my students steadily acquired a better feel for how Latin sentences are constructed. Even while reading, they seemed to recognize forms and identify parts of speech more quickly. They also became comfortable with analyzing sentences, which in turn facilitated the discussion of other matters, such as etymology and more complicated syntax. As for the compositions themselves, having a stable passage to focus on over an extended period made instruction easier for me, especially when meeting

---

[6] These new elements naturally reflect the grammar that the students have learned since writing their original English compositions. They come from the lessons of Wheelock but could be modified so that they corresponded to any textbook.

with the students individually, since they were intimately familiar with their own texts and had already spent a good amount of time working on the problems.[7] By the final stage, their paragraphs tended to be in good grammatical shape. Many of the students were clearly satisfied by having expressed original ideas in a foreign language, which made Latin seem more accessible and "real."

One problem with the exercise as it currently stands is that the first English to Latin translation is daunting. Despite the systematic approach suggested by the in-class exercises, many students were still at a loss when it came to translating on their own. Those who did well, however, were the ones who chose to deconstruct their paragraphs and then apply the system they had learned in the classroom. In making future assignments, I would require that everyone follow this method and turn in all the intermediate work in written form, along with the final, connected paragraph.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that I see this exercise as an ongoing experiment. I would be very grateful to hear the comments and criticisms of those who have tried it or something similar.

Jeffrey Beneker
Department of Classics
University of Wisconsin, Madison

---

[7] I have not required such individual meetings in the past, but I believe they would greatly improve the overall effectiveness of the exercise.

Appendix: Vocabulary for the Composition Exercises

Nouns

- letter of the alphabet: littera, -ae, f.; litterae, -ārum: a letter, i.e. epistle
- tyrant, absolute ruler: tyrannus, tyranni, m.
- abundance, supply: cōpia, -ae, f.; copiae -arum, pl., supplies, troops, forces
- ambush, plot: īnsidiae, -ārum, f. (plural only)
- anger: īra, īrae, f.
- body: corpus, corporis, n.
- book: liber, librī, m.
- boy: puer, puerī, m.; plural: boys, children
- brother: frāter, frātris, m.
- care, attention, caution, anxiety: cūra, -ae, f.
- consul: cōnsul, cōnsulis, m.
- cure, remedy: remedium, remediī, n.
- danger, risk: perīculum, perīculī, n.
- daughter: fīlia, -ae, f.
- delay: mora, -ae, f.
- desire, longing, passion, cupidity, avarice: cupiditās, cupiditātis, f.
- destruction, ruin: exitium, exitiī, n.
- disease, sickness: morbus, morbī, m.
- duty, service: officium, officiī, n.
- eagerness, zeal, pursuit, study: studium, studiī, n.
- earth, ground, land, country: terra, -ae, f.
- enough, sufficient (ly): satis (indeclinable noun, adjective, and adverb)
- eye: oculus, oculī, m.
- farmer: agricola, -ae, m.
- fatherland, native land, (one's) country: patria, patriae, f.
- fault, blame: culpa, culpae, f.
- fault, crime, vice: vitium, vitiī, n.
- fear: timor, timōris, m.
- feeling, thought, opinion, vote, sentence: sententia, -ae, f.
- field, farm: ager, agri, m.
- form, shape; beauty: forma, formae, f.
- fortune, luck: fortūna, fortūnae, f.
- friend: amīcus, amīcī, m.; amīca, -ae, f.
- friendship: amīcitia, -ae, f.
- gate, entrance: porta, -ae, f.
- gift, present: dōnum, dōnī, n.
- girl: puella, -ae, f.
- glory, fame: glōria, -ae, f.

- god: deus, deī, m. (vocative singular: deus; nominative plural deī or dī; dative and ablative plural: dīs)
- habit, custom, manner: mōs, mōris, m.
- head; leader; beginning; life; heading; chapter: caput, capitis, n.
- hour, time: hōra, -ae, f.
- human being, man: homo, hominis, m.
- king: rēx, rēgis, m.
- kiss: bāsium, bāsiī, n.
- labor, work, toil; a work, production: labor, labōris, m.
- liberty: libertās, libertātis, f.
- liesure, peace: ōtium, ōtiī, n.
- life; mode of life: vīta, -ae, f.
- love: amor, amōris, m.
- maiden, virgin: virgō, virginis, f.
- man, hero: vir, virī, m.
- manliness, courage, excellence, character, worth, virtue: virtūs, virtūtis, f.
- money: pecūnia,-ae, f.
- name: nōmen, nōminis, n.
- nature: natūra, -ae, f.
- no one, nobody: nēmō, nēminis, m. or f.
- nothing: nihil (indeclinable), n.
- number: numerus, numerī, m.
- old age: senectūs, senectūtis, f.
- peace: pāx, pācis, f.
- penalty, punishment: poena, -ae, f.; poenās dare: to pay the penalty
- philosophy: philosophia, -ae, f.
- place; passage in literature: locus, locī, m.
- plan, purpose, counsel, advice, judgement, wisdom: consilium, consiliī, n.
- pleasure: voluptās, voluptātis, f.
- poet: poēta, -ae, m.
- praise, glory, fame: laus, laudis, f.
- pupil, learner, disciple: discipulus, discipuli, m.; discipula, -ae, f.
- queen: rēgīna, -ae, f.
- reckoning, account; reason, judgement, consideration; system; manner, method: ratiō, ratiōnis, f.
- rose: rosa, -ae, f.
- rumor, report; fame, reputation: fāma, fāmae, f.
- sailor: nauta, nautae, m.
- sister: soror, sorōris, f.
- sky, heaven: caelum, caelī, n.
- son: fīlius, fīliī, m.
- song, poem: carmen, carminis, n.

- soul, spirit, mind: animus, animī, m.
- teacher, school master, school mistress: magister, magistrī, m.; magistra, -ae, f.
- people (= the people, a people), a nation: populus, populī, m.
- time; occasion, opportunity: tempus, temporis, n.
- truth: vēritās, vēritātis, f.
- victory: victōria, -ae, f.
- war: bellum, bellī, n.
- way, road, street: via, -ae, f.
- wife: uxor, uxōris, f.
- wisdom: sapientia, -ae, f.
- woman: fēmina, -ae, f.
- word: verbum, verbī, n.
- writer, author: scrīptor, scrīptōris, m.
- youth: adulēscentia, -ae, f.

Adjectives

- alone, only, the only: sōlus, -a, -um
- ancient, old-time: antīqua, -a, -um
- any: ūllus, -a, -um
- bad, wicked, evil: malus, -a, -um
- beautiful, handsome, fine: pulcher, pulchra, pulchrum
- dear: cārus, -a, -um
- either, which (of two): uter, utra, utrum
- few, a few: pauci, paucae, pauca (usually plural)
- foolish: stultus, -a, -um; stultus, -i, m: a fool
- free: līber, lībera, līberum
- friendly: amīcus, -a, -um
- full: plēnus, -a, -um
- good, kind: bonus, -a, -um
- greedy, avaricious: avārus, -a, -um
- Greek: Graecus, -a, -um; a Greek: Graecus, -ī, m.
- happy, fortunate, blessed: beātus, -a, -um
- large, great, important: magnus, -a, -um
- much, many: multus, -a, -um
- my: meus, -a, -um
- new; strange: novus, -a, -um
- not any, no, none: nullus, -a, -um
- not either, neither: neuter, neutra, neutrum
- one, single, alone: ūnus, -a, -um
- other, another: alius, alia, aliud; aliī...aliī: some ... others
- perpetual, lasting, uninterrupted: perpetuus, -a, -um
- human, pertaining to man, humane, kind, refined, cultured: humānus, -a, -um

- pretty, handsome, charming: bellus, -a, -um
- Roman: Rōmānus, -a, -um
- safe, sound: salvus, -a, -um
- second; favorable: secundus, -a, -um
- small, little: parvus, -a, -um
- sound, healthy, sane: sānus, sāna, sānum
- other (of two), second: alter, altera, alterum
- true, real, proper: vērus, -a, -um
- whole, entire: tōtus, -a, -um
- your, yours (singular): tuus, -a, -um
- your, yours (plural): vester, vestra, vestrum
- our, ours: noster, nostra, nostrum

Pronouns
- I: ego, meī, mihi, mē, mē
- we: nōs, nostrum/nostrī, nōbīs, nōs, nōbīs
- you (singular): tū, tuī, tibi, tē, tē
- you (plural): vōs, vestrum/vestrī, vōbīs, vōs, vōbīs

Demonstratives
- that of yours, that; such (sometimes with contemptuous force): iste, ista, istud
- that; the former; the famous; he, she, it, they: ille, illa, illud
- the same: īdem, eadem, idem
- this, that; he, she, it: is, ea, id
- this; the latter; he, she, it, they: hic, haec, hoc

Prepositions
- after, behind: post (+ accusative)
- down from, from; concerning, about: dē (+ ablative)
- in, on: in (+ ablative)
- into, toward; against: in (+ accusative)
- on account of, because of: propter (+ accusative)
- out of, from, from within; by reason of, on account of: ex or ē (+ ablative)
- to, up to, near to: ad (+ accusative)
- under, up under, close to: sub (+ ablative with verbs of rest; + accusative with verbs of motion)
- with: cum (+ ablative)
- without: sine (+ ablative)

Verbs
- preserve, conserve, maintain: conservō, conservāre, conservāvī, conservātum
- be able, can, could, have power: possum, posse, potuī, --
- be above, have the upper hand, surpass; overcome, conquer: superō, superāre, superāvī, superātum
- be strong, have power; be well: valeō, valēre, valuī, valitūrum

- be well, be in good health: salveō, salvēre, --, --
- be, exist: sum, esse, fuī, futūrum
- bear, endure: tolerō, tolerāre, tolerāvī, tolerātum
- blame, censure: culpō, culpāre, culpāvī, culpātum
- call, summon: vocō, vocāre, vocāvī, vocātum
- carry, carry on, manage, conduct, accomplish, perform: gerō, gerere, gessī, gestum
- come upon, find: inveniō, invenīre, invēnī, inventum
- come: veniō, venīre, vēnī, ventum
- conquer, overcome: vincō, vincere, vīcī, victum
- dare: audeō, audēre, ausus sum
- dine: cēnō, cēnāre, cēnāvī, cēnātum
- draw, drag, derive: trahō, trahere, trāxī, tractum
- drive, lead, do, act; pass, spend (life or time): agō, agere, ēgī, actum
- feel, perceive, think, experience: sentiō, sentīre, sēnsī, sēnsum
- flee, hurry away, avoid, shun: fugiō, fugere, fūgī, fugitūrum
- frighten, terrify: terreō, terrēre, terruī, territum
- give, offer: dō, dare, dedī, datum
- have, hold, possess, consider, regard: habeō, habēre, habuī, habitum
- hear, listen to: audiō, audīre, audīvī, audītum
- help, aid, assist, please: iuvō, iuvāre, iūvī, iūtum
- lead; consider, regard; prolong: dūcō, dūcere, dūxī, ductum
- learn: discō, discere, didicī, --
- live: vīvō, vīvere, vīxī, vīctum
- love, like: amō, amāre, amāvī, amātum
- make, do, accomplish: faciō, facere, fēcī, factum
- murder, kill: necō, necāre, necāvī, necātum
- owe; ought, must: dēbeō, dēbēre, dēbuī, dēbitum
- point out, show, demonstrate: dēmōnstrō, dēmōnstrāre, dēmōnstrāvi, dēmōnstrātum
- praise: laudō, laudāre, laudāvī, laudātum
- preserve, keep, guard: servō, servāre, servāvī, servātum
- remain, stay, stay behind, abide, continue: maneō, manēre, mānsī, mānsum
- remain, stay, stay behind, abide, continue: remaneō, remanēre, remānsī, remānsum
- remind, advise, warn: moneō, monēre, monuī, monitum
- satisfy, sate: satiō, satiāre, satiāvī, satiātum
- say, tell, speak; name, call: dīcō, dīcere, dīxī, dictum
- see, observe, understand: videō, vidēre, vīdī, vīsum
- send, let go: mittō, mittere, mīsī, missum
- take, capture, seize, get: capiō, capere, cēpī, captum
- teach: doceō, docēre, docuī, doctum
- think, ponder, consider, plan: cōgitō, cōgitāre, cōgitāvī, cōgitātum
- understand: intellegō, intellegere, intellēxī, intellēctum
- wander, err, go astray, be mistaken: errō, errāre, errāvī, errātum

- write, compose: scrībō, scrībere, scrīpsi, scrīptum

Adverbs

- always: semper
- because of which thing, therefore, wherefore, why: quārē
- even: etiam
- never: numquam
- nevertheless, still: tamen
- not: nōn
- often: saepe
- then, at that time; thereupon, in the next place: tum
- there: ibi
- today: hodie
- too, too much, excessively: nimis or nimium
- well, satisfactorily, quite: bene
- when: quando; sī quando: if ever
- where, when: ubi

Conjunctions

- and: et (et ... et: both ... and)
- because: quod
- but: sed
- for, in fact, truly: enim (postpositive)
- however; moreover: autem (postpositive)
- if: sī
- nor, "and not": neque, nec (neque ... neque or nec ... nec: neither ... nor)
- since: quoniam
- therefore, consequently: igitur (postpositive)
- where, when: ubi
- while: dum