

## The Path to Easy Mastery of Latin's Conjugations: How to Identify the Mood and Tense Denoted Without Memorizing Paradigms

Students of traditional elementary Latin classes have expressed a myriad of complaints about having to memorize a seemingly endless series of declensional and conjugational paradigms and the grammar each is used to denote--so much so that I have heard many teachers of such classes gloomily say, "There has to be a better way."

There is. The major remedy for the problem is the incorporation of a system that eliminates the necessity for memorizing paradigms. In this presentation, which includes projecting numerous illustrative images on a screen, I'll introduce participants to my linguistically based system that enables students to learn how to identify the mood and tense denoted by all of Classical Latin's indicative and subjunctive forms without having to memorize them in paradigms. The focus of my presentation is on morphemes.

To begin, I'll display a table that includes fifteen paradigms whose similarly spelled inflections often pose problems in identifying the Latin mood and tense denoted. The forms are displayed in groups, viz., **a**, **e**, and **i**, according to the vowel that appears immediately before the personal endings. This view helps to clarify the nature of the problem many students encounter, and especially upon being introduced to the subjunctive present forms.

I'll then introduce participants to my linguistically based system that either minimizes or eliminates the identification problems that result from similarly spelled inflections. This system, which I call *The Path*, uses a structural approach that focuses on learning: (a) how to determine the morphemes in target forms; (b) the type of grammar each morpheme in a given form is used to denote; (c) a simple notation system for describing each combination of morphemes used for

denoting the combination of mood and tense; and (d) the mood and tense that is/may be denoted by each such combination.

The second table shows the principal parts of conjugations 1, 2, 3, 3-iō, and 4. They are visually separated into two groups, Lambda (Λ) and Delta (Δ) according to the aspect denoted by their stems. The term aspect is briefly defined.

I'll then display the stem spellings shown in the first principal parts and introduce both the nomenclature for these stems as well as their abbreviations that will be used in subsequent descriptions. E.g.:

<b>Stems in First Principal Parts (Pt. 2)</b>						
<b>CONJ.:</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>3-iō</b>		<b>4</b>	
<b>PR PT:</b>	moneō		capiō		audiō	
<b>STEM:</b>	<b>mon</b>	<b>mone</b>	<b>cap</b>	<b>capi</b>	<b>aud</b>	<b>audi</b>
<b>TYPE:</b>	Stem One	Base-e	Stem One	Base-i	Stem One	Base-i
	<b>(S-I)</b>	<b>(Be)</b>	<b>(S-I)</b>	<b>(Bi)</b>	<b>(S-I)</b>	<b>(Bi)</b>

I'll then include the following: "In linguistics, the term tense refers simply to the temporal point of reference---past, present, or future-- at which a verb idea is said to occur. But in Latin, the term tense refers to the combined expression of Aspect and temporal point of reference. These two distinct grammatical notions are expressed by separate morphemes. The Aspect is conveyed by the stem, and the temporal point of reference is indicated by a vowel: a, e, i, o, or u. I refer to such vowels as 'key vowels.' And when referring to the **temporal point of reference** I use the acronym **tempore.**"

Subsequently, I'll ask participants to look at the following table on their handout. It shows the scheme of the notational symbols used in the system for concisely identifying the grammatical denotations of morphemes.

<b>Notation Symbols and their Denotations</b>		
<b>ASPECT</b>	<b>MOOD</b>	<b>TEMPORE</b>
$\Lambda$ Incomplete	<b>N</b> Indicative	<b>X</b> Past
$\Delta$ Completed	$\Sigma$ Subjunctive	<b>Y</b> Present
		<b>Z</b> Future
<b>LATIN TENSE</b>		
$\Lambda$ - <b>X</b> Imperfect	$\Delta$ - <b>X</b> Pluperfect	
$\Lambda$ - <b>Y</b> Present	$\Delta$ - <b>Y</b> Perfect	
$\Lambda$ - <b>Z</b> Future	$\Delta$ - <b>Z</b> Future Perfect	

My structural approach involves dividing the indicative and subjunctive forms into their component morphemes, determining the combinations of morphemes used to denote Aspect, Mood, & Tempore, and describing the grammar denoted by each of these morphemes. An essential part of this approach is the use of this notation system that minimizes the descriptions and their grammatical denotations.

The rest of the presentation will be a step-by-step overview that shows how the system portrays conjugational paradigms, describes their AM&TCs, concisely identifies the grammar that each morpheme in AM&TCs is used to denote, and summarizes the descriptions and their denotations in easy-to-learn formats. The following is an example of a summary.

**Summary of Descriptions & Denotations of AM&TCs (Pt. 1)**

1		2		$\Lambda$ NY
S-I+o	$\Lambda$ NY am- $\bar{o}$ $\equiv$ am- $\bar{a}$ -s am-a-t am- $\bar{a}$ -mus am- $\bar{a}$ -tis am-a-nt	2:S-I+e	$\Lambda$ NY mon-e- $\bar{o}$ mon- $\bar{e}$ -s mon-e-t mon- $\bar{e}$ -mus mon- $\bar{e}$ -tis mon-e-nt	1:S-I+a 2:S-I+e 3/4:S-I+i S-I+o S-I+u Bi+u
1:S-I+a				
3		3-i $\bar{o}$		4
S-I+o	$\Lambda$ NY d $\bar{u}$ c- $\bar{o}$ $\equiv$ d $\bar{u}$ c-i-s d $\bar{u}$ c-i-t d $\bar{u}$ c-i-mus d $\bar{u}$ c-i-tis d $\bar{u}$ c-u-nt	3:S-I+i	$\Lambda$ NY cap-i- $\bar{o}$ cap-i-s cap-i-t cap-i-mus cap-i-tis capi-u-nt	$\Lambda$ NY aud-i- $\bar{o}$ aud- $\bar{i}$ -s aud-i-t aud- $\bar{i}$ -mus aud- $\bar{i}$ -tis audi-u-nt
3:S-I+i				4:S-I+i
S-I+u		Bi+u		Bi+u