

Old Wines in New Skins: Rethinking Memorization in the Greek and Latin Classroom

Now (more than ever) the grunt work of memorization becomes less and less appealing to students in an age of digital immediacy. More, with new approaches toward Latin pedagogy, students' early strides are often followed by staggering steps running against the mounting tide of near-foreign paradigms and unmemorized vocabulary.

Realizing these ground rules, the Classics program at the Cleveland School of Science and Medicine has developed a program that, while requiring all students in an urban magnet school with 98% poverty to take Greek and Latin at the same time, yields double the national average of medals on the National Latin Exam and 80% above the national average on the Latin SAT2. Though our school scores above the District average on the ACT (22 compared to 16), we are not dealing with an overly selective sample group -- with about a third of our students coming into the program reading significantly below grade level.

The methodology that has yielded these results argues for a rethinking of traditional and contemporary approaches toward memorization in the Latin classroom. Rather, we argue for an approach toward memorization that embraces an amalgam of traditional, modern, and postmodern approaches toward student acquisition of Latin and Greek vocabulary and forms. There is a certain truth in the ancient Egyptian maxim that the ears of students are on their backs; namely, there is no royal road toward memorization. And the traditional approach toward memorization of grammatical paradigmata through repetitive memorization tasks (e.g, writing it out three times from memory) of daily paradigm quizzes yield real results.

But to the traditional approach, we must add the modern innovations of the Waldo Sweet approach to assist students in memorization of the paradigmata. More, as we know that the short-term, workplace memory is essential in transferring knowledge to long-term memory, a planned

reorganization of the paradigms allow for more lasting content.

Finally, through incorporating the post-modern digital syndrome of pocket technology, we allow for differentiation and student investment through online mobile apps to reinforce memorization of paradigmata as well as vocabulary using a key-words in context approach that only mobile technology can deliver.

Through arguing for this amalgam of approaches toward memorization, we believe that these successes we've seen can be replicated and improved upon in other settings.