

THIS PIOUS WORKE:
THE TEACHING OF CLASSICAL LANGUAGES
IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND¹⁾

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ABSTRACT

When the aims, traditions and methods of the English grammar school were transferred almost wholesale to Puritan New England, starting from approximately 1630, the teaching of the classical languages — specifically Latin, Greek and Hebrew — thereby became the central tenet of New England education. A tradition of Latin schools, beginning with the Boston Latin School (1635), spread across the new colony, and remained in place until approximately 1800.

This paper argues that the teaching and learning of Classical languages in New England was not an aberrant event but was the foundation of the American language learning experience. The “Protestant” approach to Classical language teaching brought with it increased use of the vernacular, which accorded well with the Puritan outlook. This outlook also approved of the “pyramid” view of language learning, which involved the laying of a solid foundation, largely but not exclusively in the grammar of the language. Latin, the first and most comprehensively taught of the Classical languages, was not seen as a group of separate skills, and it is misleading to pin the reductionist “grammar-translation” label on it. Memorization was strenuously cultivated, as were meticulousness and

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mastery. Mastery was an essential concept, and indeed there was no advance for a student who could not master the material. Teachers were concerned about pronunciation models, the teaching of syntax, vocabulary, dictionary use, and broad aspects of Classical history and culture.

More practically, the teachers were also concerned that their students reach the required standards for university entrance, meaning proficiency in Latin and a modest acquaintance with Greek grammar. The generally harsh conditions prevalent in Colonial Latin schools produced little innovation in international language teaching terms, but the local model of language teaching that was established in the seventeenth century remains — like the Constitution of 1787 — as a constant reminder of early promise and achievement.

1. INTRODUCTION: PIOUS WORKE IN EUROPE AND NEW ENGLAND

In this paper I shall try to give an accurate historical description of the teaching of classical languages in New England in terms that make it accessible to contemporary language teachers, together with any lessons which may be learned from that experience. The thesis of the paper is that language teaching has a continuous history with identifiable features which reach back at least as far as the Renaissance in Quattrocento Italy, and in the minds of at least one writer much further than that²⁾. That history is also replete with language teachers of considerable stature whose thinking was in no way inferior to our own.

As an example of the continuity of language teaching, the Colonial period created a body of educational experiences against which later experiences reacted, and for that reason if no other the period is important. The rising interest in the teaching of modern foreign languages in the nine-

2) See Louis G. Kelly, *25 Centuries of Language Teaching* (Rowley, MA., 1969).

teenth century was in part attributable to the increasing irrelevance for the bulk of the American people of classical language instruction. In the end the Latin schools had to change or go under. But at their peak, and on their own terms, these schools were fine examples of language teaching, staffed by caring and involved teachers who struggled to maintain standards that they believed essential to the advancement of civilized society.

(a) Humanist Thought on Education and Language

To understand the New England educational saga it is necessary to examine first the nature of humanist thought on education, language, and so forth, and then to look at the ways in which Puritan and Humanist thought differed. The Grammar Schools of England also require separate treatment, as they provided the actual models which the schools in New England imitated. The practicalities of setting up schools in the seventeenth century will be briefly touched on, but this area is well covered in the existing literature, and the reader will merely be referred to several of the more important analyses.

Progressive humanist thought in sixteenth century Europe, for example that of men like Vives, Erasmus, and Colet, favored a number of areas of action. Some of these were reactions to manifestly “wrong” practices, while others were responses to an observably changing society. The following brief summary pinpoints the major elements:³⁾

1. *Ecclesiastical Reform.* The humanists attempted to re-focus thought on early Christianity. The simple messages of the Bible had become adulterated and rendered opaque by centuries of ill-informed commentaries.

3) The following section makes use of Joan Simon’s *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966).

Sophistry and superstition existed side by side. Church administration was corrupt.

2. *Educational Reform.* Medieval scholasticism now seemed outmoded and its introverted nature out of tune with sixteenth century life. Learning, argued the humanists, should serve the living. Joan Simon describes Colet's beliefs:

Essential to this end [that learning should serve the living] was a rational approach to learning, a clearing away of scholastic confusion so that grammar became a science of service to understanding, a full comprehension of those works of classical and Christian writers which incorporated the sum of human wisdom in lay and religious matters.⁴⁾

A deeper knowledge of the scriptures was an integral part of this plan. Symbolically, the founding by Colet of St. Paul's in London (1510), a lay school which aroused considerable controversy at the time, showed that schooling could come out from under the umbrella of the church. Learning could now occupy a prime place in society, influencing both the present and future course of social development.

3. *Societal Reform.* The classics appeared to offer guidance in areas where previously they had seemed irrelevant. Arising as they did out of the city-states of antiquity, the classics resonated with the new urban and increasingly secular civilization of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The humanist view was that here were models — in law, literature, science, psychology, politics, and history — which could profitably be examined and whose lessons could form the basis for civil and moral improvement. The treatises of Roman orators and the scientific outlook of the Greeks would help to form an outlook conducive to rational

4) Simon, *op. cit.* 80.

debate. By comparison with medieval schooling, which had focused on ecclesiastical texts,⁵⁾ the humanist agenda implied an uplifting — perhaps a gentrification — of society, as well as a broadening of view.

4. *Language Reform.* There was no intent, per se, in the humanists' minds to bring about language reform. The basic fact, however, was that vernaculars were becoming respectable. In England in the key areas where Latin and French had dominated — law, government, literature, religion, scholarship, and education — there was a steady move towards English.⁶⁾ In 1570 Roger Ascham had advocated the use of English in the teaching of Latin, partly with an eye to improving classical education, and partly to establish greater awareness of English. The narrow medieval interest in Latin speech, writing, and disputations would be replaced with a more comprehensive model which would include at the elementary stage basic instruction in English, and at the upper levels wide reading of classical literature. All the humanists were aware of these shifts, and Vives, for example, insisted that teachers should be as well versed in the vernacular as they were in the classics. Historical events, as we shall see, hastened this trend towards complete vernacularization.

It is necessary to frame the humanists' zeal for reform within the religious context of the times. Their motto *ad fontes* (to the source) catches this context admirably. Regarding the central aspect of life — religion — the Bible had been widely available in St. Jerome's Vulgate, his Latin rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek originals. However, the humanists felt that the sources of the Bible had been imperfectly mastered; that is to say, the Hebrew and Greek originals had not been given due

5) Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340–1548* (Princeton, 1985), 48.

6) Dick Leith, *A Social History of English* (London, 1983), 44.

attention and needed “serious and impartial understanding” if they were to be freed from “the medieval hermeneutic”.⁷⁾ In short, there was a felt need to return to the literal sense of the Bible, something which could only be achieved by able scholarship.

Latin, Greek, and Hebrew therefore received a new impetus because of the need for accurate translation from the original manuscripts of the Bible. Greek was established at Oxford at the end of the fifteenth century, and in 1523 Robert Wakefield began teaching Hebrew at Cambridge.⁸⁾ Following King Henry VIII’s break with Rome, Thomas Cromwell acted swiftly in his capacity as Secretary of State to reform the curricula of both institutions, with the result that “the seven liberal sciences and the three tongues of Latin, Greek and Hebrew”⁹⁾ were formally constituted. More pragmatically, such recognition bolstered the Protestant cause in the great controversies with Catholic theologians. As Jones says, “an educated ministry capable of refuting the Catholics and of instructing the laity was essential”.¹⁰⁾

(b) Puritan Thought and Aspirations for Language Teaching

In the minds of the Puritans, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge came to be regarded not so much as institutions of scholarship as nurturers of Puritan ideals. The fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, for example, had to be “professors of pure religion, contrary to Popery and other heresies”.¹¹⁾ Emmanuel — in Samuel Morison’s words “The Puritan Col-

7) G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester, 1983), 56.

8) Jones, *op. cit.* 182.

9) In Jones, *op. cit.* 192.

10) Jones, *op. cit.* 184.

11) Jones, *op. cit.* 145.

lege” — contributed many graduates to New England life, in his estimation giving some 35 prominent figures to the young New England colony, including John Harvard and Ezekiel Cheever.¹²⁾ Emmanuel and the two other militant Puritan Cambridge colleges — St. John’s and Sidney Sussex — together provided more than half of the 100 or so Cambridge alumni in New England before 1646.¹³⁾ The scholarship that such men took with them was one colored by the pressing social agenda of maintaining the Puritan outlook. That outlook regarded learning as a means to an end, though the New England schoolboy would not have realized this. In considering the First Fruits of the educational enterprise, we find:

Inasmuch that we are confident, if these early blossomes may be cherished and warmed with the influence of the friends of Learning, and lovers of this pious worke, they will by the help of God, come to maturity in a short time.¹⁴⁾

To achieve that “maturity” the Puritan Latin schools gave even greater attention to the classical languages than had the old Catholic ones. For the schoolboy, whether in New England or in Europe, it was *plus ça change*.

(c) English Grammar Schools and New England Latin Schools

The English grammar school, the model for the Latin Schools of New England, owed its origin to the need to prepare students for university, where they would acquire the skills needed to maintain public and religious life. Hoole set out the broad aim of the grammar school in 1660:

So that in six (or at the most seven) yeares time (which children commonly squander away, if they be not continued in the Schoole, after they can read English, and write well) they may easily attain to such knowledge in the Latine,

12) Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Harvard, 1935), 92–3.

13) Morison, *op. cit.*, 40.

14) In Morison, *op. cit.* 433.

Greek, and Hebrew Tongues, as is requisite to furnish them for future studies in the Universities, or to enable them for any ingenuous profession or employment, which their friends shall think fit to put them upon, in other places".¹⁵⁾

The grammar school system typically took boys at about seven, educated them for three years with an "Usher" and for three more with the "Master", and then sent them on to Oxford or Cambridge, or perhaps to an "ingenuous profession" (= liberal, high-minded). Learning the Latin language *per se* was more or less complete by the end of the third year, at which point the students passed into the care of the Master. Under him they began to range widely among the Latin authors, for example Ovid and Terence; they also began to write epistles (letters) in Latin, to study Rhetoric (the use of tropes and figures), and to perfect their pronunciation by learning verses (e.g., out of Ovid's *De Tristibus*) and other suitable passages by heart. In the fourth year, the study of Greek began. Some idea of the level that was attained in these languages may be gathered from Hoole's suggestion for fifth-year students: "And then you may let them translate a Psalm out of English into Latine, and out of Latine into Greek, and compare them with the Septuagint Pslater".¹⁶⁾ Hebrew ("which is very necessary for all such as would be acquainted with the Original of the Bible"¹⁷⁾) was added in Form Six for three days a week, though achievement did not progress beyond an understanding of the grammar.

Such was the haste to get education in the new world established that the colonists proceeded with the remarkable step of founding the Boston

15) Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole* (London, 1660), 204.

16) Hoole, *op. cit.* 175.

17) Hoole, *op. cit.* 191.

Latin School in 1635 to serve the projected “Colledge” (Harvard, 1636). Entry into Harvard in its early years had just one academic requirement:

When any Schollar is able to understand Tully or such like classicall Latine Author *extempore*, and make and speake true Latine in Verse and Prose, *suout aiunt Marte*; And decline perfectly the Paradigm’s of Nounes and Verbes in the Greeke tongue: Let him then and not before be capable of admission into the Colledge.¹⁸⁾

As in all universities of the time, there was a Latin-only rule at Harvard: “the Scholars shall never use their Mother-toungue except that in publike Exercises of oratory or such like, they bee called to make them in English”.¹⁹⁾ This rule may never have been followed, and apparently soon died out. After admission to the college, Harvard students reviewed their Latin, improved their Greek, and added Hebrew.²⁰⁾ In order to get the “first Degree” the scholar had to be “able to read the Originalls of the Old and New Testament into the Latine tongue, and to resolve them *Logically*”.²¹⁾ This meant being able to translate the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament into Latin. Even with four years in which to reach this standard, this represents considerable scholarship in view of the extensive curriculum of the college. In a letter describing the Commencement ceremonies of 1642 the following “exercises” were heard:

...Latin and Greek Orations, and Declamations, and Hebrew Analysis, Grammaticall, Logicall & Rhetoricall of the Psalms: And their Answers and Disputations in Logicall, Ethicall, Physicall and Metaphysicall Questions; and

18) In Morison, *op. cit.* 433.

19) Morison, *op. cit.* 336.

20) Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*, (San Francisco, 1977), 31.

21) In Morison, *op. cit.* 436.

so were found worthy of the first degree, (commonly called Batchelour) *pro more Academiarum in Anglia:*²²⁾

Pro more Academiarum in Anglia (according to the custom of the universities in England) indicates the extent to which the university set out to follow the English model.

With Harvard as the new Oxford and Cambridge, the growing New England system took on a top-down appearance with primary attention to a Latin-based education. Both European tradition and Puritan educational thought were at one on this matter, taking comfort from the “discipline, devotion, Stoicism, public spirit and strict censorship in the classical city”, even if rather alarmed by the “heathenism, pride, and unqualified exaltation of political and merely moral or philosophic virtue”²³⁾ that came with it. As Robert Middlekauff has said: “Unaware at first that English achievements were unattainable in the new world, the Puritans carefully imitated the old and familiar educational practices”.²⁴⁾

The curriculum of the Boston Latin School²⁵⁾ set the tone for future Latin schools throughout New England, but there had been an interesting earlier attempt by the Virginia Company of London to set up a school in that territory in 1622. This attempt, though it came to nothing, had curricular and methodological implications for New England, since it resulted in the publication of John Brinsley’s *A Consolation for our Grammar Schooles* (1622). Brinsley, the already well-known author of the *Ludus*

22) In Morison, *op cit.* 436

23) Lorraine Smith Pangle & Thomas L. Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty*, (Kansas, 1993), 27.

24) Robert Middlekauff, *Ancients and Axioms: Secondary Education in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven and London, 1963), 6.

25) For a history of this school, see Pauline Holmes, *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School, 1635–1935*, (Cambridge, 1935).

Literarius (1612), was contracted by the Virginia Company to write a curriculum suitable for the projected new colonial school, and the *Consolation* (meaning encouragement) was the result. Brinsley (1566-c. 1630), a Cambridge-educated grammar school master from Leicestershire, thus inadvertently became one of the methodological influences on the teaching of Latin in New England. His devout Puritan ideas found a ready welcome there, particularly his interest in teaching Latin out of the English vernacular.

Brinsley's ideas were later endorsed by Charles Hoole, the other educator to have a major influence on teaching methodology at this time. Hoole had translated Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium* in 1659, and in the following year published his own major work *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole*. This comprehensive book detailed what should be learned each year in the grammar school. Brinsley's and Hoole's writings — 1622 and 1660 respectively — therefore represented the most progressive thinking on the teaching of languages that was available to the schoolmasters of the New England colonies. Further, both men represented what might be termed the Protestant view of language teaching, that is, they approved of the use of the vernacular which up to this point had been regarded as totally inadequate for the conduct of civilized life.²⁶⁾ The vernacular should be cultivated just as assiduously as the Classics, they argued, and in this they were in line with another Protestant, Comenius (1592–1670). Translation, all three agreed, would make language learning easier for the pupil.

Throughout the colonial period, New England students received essen-

26) They were "barbarous dialects, unsuitable for high, religious, literary and intellectual themes, and without anything resembling a canon of correctness". Tom McArthur, *Worlds of Reference* (Cambridge, 1986), 81.

tially the same education as if they had been attending a similar institution in England. Even the textbooks were the same until about 1800, when they began to be printed in America. Intellectually there was a similar focus, though practicalities frequently watered down humanist ideals.²⁷⁾ Even with more limited reading of the Latin Classics, and with Greek confined to a knowledge of the grammar, the aim of producing scholars and leaders was not diminished. Not until the political upheavals of the Revolutionary period were there changes for the Latin schools, when fewer and fewer boys could be found to sign up for Classical studies. At that time only those schools in larger urban locations managed to maintain a full curriculum.²⁸⁾ By the end of the eighteenth century, new “academies” were beginning to outnumber Latin schools, though this did not mean the end of the humanist dream: as late as the 1930s there was still vigorous debate over the question of awarding B. A. degrees to students with no ability in Latin.

2. THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LATIN

(a) The Status of Latin in 1635

The status of Latin in 1635 is best understood as two distinct strands: its actual use as a *lingua franca* in England and Europe on the one hand, and

27) “In general, when they appeared in America, the grammar schools had lost the vital spirit of Humanism that had characterized the better European classical schools of the Renaissance”. R. Freeman Butts, *A Cultural History of Western Education* (New York, 1955), 262.

28) There had, of course, always been enormous differences in the resources — books, teachers, adequate buildings, financial support, etc. — available to individual schools in New England, but the approach of the Revolution accentuated these.

29) Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636*. (San Francisco, 1977), 214.

its status as a school subject on the other. Regarding its actual use as a *lingua franca*, Latin had been declining in public use for almost exactly 100 years. The key event had been the break with Rome by Henry VIII in 1534, from which point Latin rapidly lost ground in England, and indeed was in retreat in Europe as well. English rode high on the back of the Reformation, a fact confirmed by the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible in 1611. By the time of the Restoration in 1660 the English Chancellor, Lord Clarendon, could say, "Latin hath ceased to be a language, if ever it was any".³⁰⁾

In the schools, however, the situation was different. Far from being in decline, as it was in the rest of society, Latin there received a boost. The rise in interest in English that followed the Protestant Reformation had provided a fresh context for Latin, identifying it as a Classical language (together with Greek) whose methods of analysis, style, and eloquence could provide a model for the fledgling study of English. Its connection with the medieval church was finally severed, and Classical Latin writers like Cicero could be studied. However, this new status of Latin was dramatically different in the post-Reformation period: instead of being the medium of learning it had been in Medieval times, when it had deep connections with the Church, it was now a taught language focusing on classical writers such as Cicero. Latin had become a school "subject", and learning *per se* was to be obtained elsewhere.³¹⁾

Even as a taught language, Latin was subject to two distinct pressures regarding its functions and aims. One was the humanist line that stretched back to Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570) and was concerned with the education of the courtier. It took for its theme the ideal of

30) Quoted in Howatt, *A History of English Language Teaching* (Oxford, 1984), 53.

31) Leith, *op. cit.*, 48–49.

Quintillian, the “good man skilled in speaking” (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*). It appealed to the nobility and the future leaders of society, acquainting them with the great Latin and Greek thinkers. Ascham’s six-part method took students into the higher literary areas and prepared them to be public figures in either church or state.³²⁾ Ascham’s ideal of the Renaissance man is caught by Foster Watson, a man who

was to lead an [sic] universal life, and for that the highest culture was necessary, and the beginning of all culture was grammar — grammar, of course, in Quintillian’s sense, the intelligent training of boys in the reading of the good authors who had withstood the test of the ages, only to strengthen their position through the accumulated criticisms of past and present scholars.³³⁾

Elsewhere Foster Watson mentions the need, in the humanist view, for contact with “the best and noblest that has been done in history, and written in literature”.³⁴⁾

While aspects of this ideal were present in the New England Latin schools, there was a second, more practical, line as well. This other line, which Howatt calls “puritanical”, had found its clearest expression in Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605). According to Howatt, “Bacon and the Puritan movement disapproved of the ‘delicate’ literary interests of humanists like Ascham with their stress on rhetoric, style, and eloquence”.³⁵⁾ Puritan interest was at once more mundane and more public, and in the schools this translated into the practicalities of learning a language that would lead to knowledge of the world through reason. Comenius, Brinsley, Hoole and others who sincerely applied themselves to solv-

32) Howatt, *op. cit.* 34.

33) Foster Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools* (London, 1916), 19.

34) Foster Watson, *op. cit.* 127.

35) Howatt, *op. cit.* 39.

ing pedagogic problems relating to language teaching were following in Bacon's footsteps.

It was the latter type — the practical and Puritanical line rather than the humanistic — that held the greatest sway in the New England Latin schools. This is evident from the way in which many Latin schools began to offer more in the way of practical language instruction than a broad reading in the Classics. While the Boston Latin School certainly maintained its humanistic reading list, it is clear that the majority of New England Latin schools concentrated on getting students into Harvard, to the exclusion of a broader education.

(b) Renaissance Views of Language: The Example of Hoole's *Lily*

The view of language held by Renaissance schoolmasters inevitably affected the way they taught. The Greeks had seen language as being made up of successive parts: the letter, the syllable, the word, and the sentence.³⁶⁾ A specific example of this can be seen in Hoole's version of Lily's *Grammar* (1651), a text with a fine pedigree since it had originally been written by William Lily and John Colet, with revisions by Erasmus. It had first appeared in 1514 and eventually went through 80 printings.³⁷⁾ Hoole's version of this text was popular in the Boston Latin School since it offered the Latin and English texts on facing pages. It is in four parts, of which the first is *Orthographie* ("the first part of Grammar, which teacheth with what letters anie word is to bee spelled; as *lectio* not *lexio*."³⁸⁾ More

36) Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989), 156.

37) Grendler, *op. cit.* 193.

38) Charles Hoole, *The Latine Grammar fitted for the use of schools* (London, 1651), 2.

important than the study of letters was the study of syllables (*prosodia*). Grendler notes the importance of this unit in Greek, Latin and Italian, describing these as “syllable-oriented languages”.³⁹⁾ Hoole finds himself in a quandary over the position of syllables, because although it might appear natural to study them after letters, pedagogic considerations indicated a move directly from letters to words (*Etymologie*).

Etymologie — “which teacheth how to know the difference of words, duly considering the properties or things belonging to everie one of them”⁴⁰⁾ — occupied some 170 pages of Hoole’s text, and presumably an equally large proportion of the student’s time. The word “etymology” was then being used in its now-archaic sixteenth century meaning, as the grammar of inflections, or what is now called morphology. The eight traditional parts of speech (Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Participle, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposition, and Interjection) were treated at length here, in what amounted to the heart of Latin Grammar as it had been taught since the time of Donatus in the fourth century.

Hoole’s text next moved to Syntax (“Syntax, or Construction, is the third part of Grammar, which teacheth the due joining of words together”⁴¹⁾). The focus here was on the agreements that were necessary for the correct construction of sentences in Latin. For example, the first chapter of this section dealt with the agreement between the Nominative case and the verb. These agreement exercises led the student to the making of short phrases and even sentences, whether written or spoken. For example, the student might make *homo bonus, hominis boni, homini bono* and so forth, and then proceed to other examples using a relative

39) Grendler, *op. cit.*, 157.

40) Hoole, *op. cit.* 16.

41) Hoole, *op. cit.* 188.

pronoun: *poeta elegans cuius, poetae elegantes quorum* and so on.⁴²⁾ Such exercises represented the first steps towards fluency in Latin.

The final 28 pages of Hoole's textbook were devoted to prosody (*Prosodia*). This section assumed the prior understanding of the syllable structure of Latin, but then went on to set out the Renaissance analysis of intonation, which consisted of three parts: (a) Spirits ("the manner of uttering a syllable with a breath"), (b) Tones/Accents ("the manner of pronouncing a syllable by lifting it up, or letting it down"), and (c) Time/Quantity of Syllables. The student learned the rules and then applied them in his reading and in his speech. Given the fact that speaking Latin was such a commonplace activity, *prosodia* may have received very little attention.

Letters, words, and sentences represented the steady development of language acquisition during the Renaissance. The psychological underpinning consisted of a belief in two traditional factors, memorization and repetition. Consequently, students initially memorized the rules of grammar; that is, they memorized the actual rule and then the inflected forms that fell under it, together with the exceptions that did not. The memorized rules and paradigms (with exceptions) were then repeated at regular intervals, for example, every week. The boys were required to "recite by heart" large amounts of text, according to Nathaniel Williams' account of the Boston Latin School in 1712. As he says:

first in Learning by heart & then acc. to their capacities understanding the Accidence and Nomenclator, in construing & parsing acc. to the English rules of Syntax Sententiae Pueriles Cato & Corderius & Aesops Fables".⁴³⁾

42) Examples from Grendler, *op. cit.* 197.

43) In Holmes, *op. cit.* 375.

Students thus learned the whole grammar book in their first two or three years of Latin. They also memorized pithy phrases or sayings, such as those mentioned by Williams (above) from *Disticha Catonis*, the medieval schoolbook of Cato's moral precepts to his son, used in the Boston Latin School from the early seventeenth century. For example,

Contra verbosos noli contendere verbis:

Sermo datur cunctis, animi sapientia paucis.

Try not with words the talker to outdo;

On all is speech bestowed: good sense on few.⁴⁴⁾

The student would learn off such material, and be able to repeat it on demand. Memory was thus seen as a way to stock the empty mind of the young scholar, and these memorized chunks would form the basis for subsequent facility with the language.

Memory was tested and reinforced by constant repetition to ensure retention of the material. Related to this, Hoole was adamant that the pupil should not progress from one piece of work or stage of linguistic development until he had mastered it completely: "And let this Rule be observed in performing these and all manner of exercises; that they never go about a new one, till they have finished that they began."⁴⁵⁾ Here he expressed one of the central tenets of the Renaissance approach to language learning: the importance of thoroughness in every aspect.

In modern teaching terms the methodology for teaching Latin—as expressed by Hoole — is hard to categorize, since it was neither a "foreign" nor a "second" language, nor even a "specific purpose" language. Alternatively, it was all of these: "foreign" in that it was learned in contexts which had no immediate counterpart outside the classroom; "second" in

44) From Grendler, *op. cit.* 198.

45) Hoole, *A New Discovery...*, 156.

that it was distanced, as Walter Ong says, from hearth and home;⁴⁶⁾ and “specific” because learning it was the *sine qua non* for entry into any professional position, such as law, medicine, or the church, or even into any clerical position. However, Ong has shown how in social and educational terms Latin may best be regarded as a foreign language, and indeed had been a “foreign” language for more than a millennium before the Renaissance. As a foreign language without any native speakers, it had to rely solely on texts rather than on any aural input for its models, making it “closed” in a number of senses that do not apply to foreign languages nowadays.

3. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

(a) Memorization of Grammar

From his entry into the grammar school the child began to learn by heart Lily’s or later Cheever’s Latin grammar, often without in any way applying the rules or even understanding their import. The primary matter of the grammar book was to be learned verbatim, bringing into play the medieval *ars memoriæ*, which often included mnemonics. This grammatical base began with a thorough knowledge of the eight parts of speech (e.g., Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Participle, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposition and Interjection) and an understanding of their relationships to one another.⁴⁷⁾ Paul Grendler describes the work of a sixteenth century pedagogue in these terms:

46) Walter Ong, *Interfaces of the Word*, (Ithica, 1977), 27.

47) Holmes, *op. cit.* records that Charles William Eliot, who was president of Harvard into the twentieth century, wrote: “At ten years of age [1844] I committed to memory many rules of syntax, the meaning of which I had no notion of, although I could apply them in a mechanical way”. 376–7.

He begins by defining letter, syllable, word, and speech. He must then explain the noun, how it is divided (into substantive and adjectival nouns), and its declensions. Then he teaches the verb: into how many parts it is divided and its conjugation and “construction” (i.e., syntactical use). The grammarian does the same for the other parts of speech.⁴⁸⁾

There is no evidence that things had changed for the pupils of New England. A typical passage from Cheever’s grammar introduces the verb:

In Conjugating or Declining of Verbs, we are chiefly to mind the First person Singular of the Indicative Mood Present Tense, the Infinitive Mood Present Tense, the First person Singular of the Indicative Mood Preterperfect Tense, and the First Supine, because of these all other Moods and Tenses are formed.⁴⁹⁾

Appearances notwithstanding, Cheever had, in fact, made things easy for the pupils at the Boston Latin Grammar school, by offering his grammar in English; previous generations had learned it both in English and Latin from Hoole’s bilingual version of Lily (1651), and before that again from Lily’s original Latin version of 1514. Grammar, therefore, fully occupied the young student for his first two or three years, a situation which is not noticeably different today.⁵⁰⁾

One imperative that caused the grammar of Latin to be emphasized was that Latin was being used to transact business, to name objects scientifically, and to communicate ideas across a Europe that had no alternative means of communication. Consequently, in the learning of Latin grammar at this time (c. 1620), minute attention to grammatical detail was absolutely necessary otherwise the value of Latin as a *lingua franca* would

48) Grendler, *op. cit.* 194.

49) Ezekiel Cheever, *A Short Introduction to the Latin Tongue, For the Use of the Lower Forms in the [Boston] Latin School* (Boston, 1713), 20.

50) *Catalogue of the Boston Latin School, 1996* (Boston, 1996), 59–60.

be lost. Meticulousness was also essential because of the fact that Latin is heavily inflected, which means that there are no approximations. Words agree and are correct, or they don't agree and are wrong. It was therefore vital to teach "the right sort of Latin in the right way".⁵¹⁾ A final imperative came from grammar being seen as the foundation for reading the Classics. Thus the Renaissance view of grammar was a functional rather than academic one, and this carried over into New England.

(b) Elementary Oral Work: Children's Talk and Dialogues

The student began with the 23 Latin letters, which themselves were analyzed into three: their names, forms (their written "*Character*"), and pronunciation. Further, letters were "distinguished" as being either vowels or consonants, with consonants being further split into "mutes" and "semivowels". The student therefore commenced his study of Latin by a thorough learning of the alphabet, the forms of small and capital letters, their pronunciation, and other useful things about them. Part of *orthographie* was *Orthoëpie*:

Orthoëpie, or Right Utterance, is the manner of right speaking out; as *Homo*, not *omo*. Boies must neither over-hasten their speech, nor paus between everie word, but must be made to avoid the usual faults in pronouncing;⁵²⁾

Consequently, a brief account of syllables was offered early on, with an emphasis on acquainting the student with basic Latin pronunciation. A syllable was defined as "a taking letters together, and uttering them with one breath; as *vir-tus*." Following the division of syllables into "improper" and "proper", the advice was offered that, "Hee that would write rightly

51) Vivian Salmon, *The Study of Language in 17th-Century England* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1988), 3.

52) Hoole, *The Latine Grammar Fitted for the Use of Schools* (London, 1651), 12.

must learn, as hee write's, *to part syllables, and put them together.*" Five rules for the correct identification and pronunciation of multi-syllable Latin words followed, for example: "In words of manie syllables a consonant set between two vowels belong's to the later; as *Do-mi-nus.*"⁵³⁾

The introduction to pronunciation began at the same time as construing (the word- for-word translation of a passage) since the pupil was expected not only to learn the grammar rules "by heart" but also be able to pronounce the Latin correctly. At this time too he began to read sentences of two or three words, from such texts as *Sententiae Pueriles*, a book of maxims collected by Leonard Kuhlmann in 1544, or Cato's *Disticha*. There would have been considerable choral work and almost endless repetition, as Caravolas has recently expressed it:

Tous les jours, les disciples récitent par coeur les préceptes de grammaire, les paradigmes des déclinaisons et des conjugations, le nouveau vocabulaire, quelques lignes ou quelques pages d'un auteur.⁵⁴⁾

Charles Hoole gave specific instructions for the teaching of *Sententiae Pueriles*, and these give a sense of the broad nature of Latin teaching in the elementary stages:

1. Construe out of Latine into English, and then out of English into Latine.
2. Decline the Nounes and form the Verbs in it throughout, and give the rules for the concordance and construction of the Words.
3. Bring their lessons fair writ out both in English and Latine in a little paper book, which will exceedingly further them in spelling and writing truly.
4. To fix their Lessons the better in their memorie, you may ask them such plain questions, as they may easily answer by the words in the Sentence.

53) Hoole, *op. cit.* 14.

54) Jean Antoine Caravolas, "Apprendre à Parler une Langue Étrangère à la Renaissance". *Historiographica Linguistica*, XXII, 3, 286.

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5. Let them also imitate a Sentence sometimes by changing some of the words, and sometimes altering their Accidents.
6. Give them sometimes the English of a Sentence to make into Latine of themselves, and then let them compare it with the Latine in the book, and see wherein they come short of it, or in what Rule they faile.⁵⁵⁾

Following the construing (No. 1), the parsing (naming the parts of speech: No. 2), and the writing in notebooks of these *sententiae* or maxims (No. 3), the student should be involved in oral question and answer using the textbook to find the answers (No. 4), and in oral grammar involving changing agreements such as singular to plural, and so forth. By the end of all this he would certainly have memorized the maxim itself.

(c) Colloquies

The next stage was to move on to colloquies, or dialogues. Dialogues had been a mainstay of language teaching since Anglo-Saxon times, and they were certainly popular in the Middle Ages.⁵⁶⁾ In the Renaissance their main proponents had been Erasmus and his friend Vives. Holmes records that Erasmus' *Colloquia* (original edition 1524) and *Corderius'* *Colloquia* (originally 1564) were probably in use in Boston in 1683. Castilio's *Dialogorum Sacrorum Libri* (Geneva, 1543), a history of the Bible in dialogue form, was definitely part of the 1752 curriculum.

These dialogues were linguistically simple and often centered on school-boy life. A very brief example from Corderius, extremely popular because of his Protestant thinking, gives the idea:

55) Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole* (London, 1660), 39.

56) Kelly, *25 Centuries of Language Teaching* (Rowley, MA., 1969), 120.

Colloquie 34

A Dialogue between Campanus and Languinus

- C. Habesne multos libros?* Have you many books?
- L. Non admodum.* Not very many.
- C. Sed quos habes?* But what have you?
- L. Rudimenta Grammatica, Colloquia Scholastica, Terentium, Epistolas Ciceronis cum Gallica interpretatione, Catonem, Dictionarium, Testamentum Anglicum, Psalmos cum Catechismo; praeterea librum chartaceum ad scribendum dictata praeceptoris. Tu vero quos habes?* The Grounds of Grammar, School Colloquies, Terence, Tullie's Epistles with a French translation, Cato, a dictionary, an English Testament, the Psalms with a catechism; and besides a Paper book to write the Master's dictates in. But what books have you?
- C. Omnes habeo quos enumerasti, praeter Catonem, Terentium et Ciceronis Epistolas. Cur enim libros haberem qui non praeleguntur in classe nostra?* I have all which you reckoned, except Cato, Terence, and Tullie's Epistles. For what should I do with books which are not read in our form?
- L. At ego, dum sumus otiosi, lego interdum illos; ut semper aliquid addiscam novi, praesertim in Lingua Latina et bonis moribus.* But I do read them sometimes, while we are at leisure; that I may always learn something that is new, especially in the Latine tongue, and good manners.
- C. Prudenter facis, mi Languine. O me miserum! qui nunquam didici quid sit studiosum esse.* You do discreetly, my Languine. Alas poor wretch I! who never learnt what it was to be dilligent at

my books!

L. Disce igitur; praestet enim sero Learn then; for it is better to learn
quam nunquam discere. late than never.⁵⁷⁾

This colloquy is from Hoole's 1652 edition of Corderius, which had the specific aim "that children by the help of their Mother Tongue may the better learn to speak Latine in ordinary discourse". Like many such colloquies both in Corderius and elsewhere, No. 34 presents the dichotomy of the "good" and "bad" student, with evident moral implications. It also ends with an eminently quotable quote, better late than never. Since the dialogues had to be learned and recited — in a manner reminiscent of recent audio-lingual methodology — there was not merely immediate practice but also possible future use for this line.

Hoole also describes how to use books of colloquies, particularly his own version of *Pueriles Confabulatinclæ*, which he published in 1659:

1. Let them read a whole Colloquie (if it be not too long) at once both in English and Latine, not minding to construe it verbatim at the first going it over, but to render the expressions wholly as they stand, and are answerable one to another, and this will acquaint them with the matter in the book, and enable them to read both the Languages more readily.
2. At a second going over, let them construe it Grammatically, and then take any phrase or sentence in the present Lesson, and make such another by it, changing either the words, or some of their Accidents, as the present occasion requireth; ex. gr. As they say in the singular Number: God save you, *Salve, Sis salvus, jubeo te salvere, or ave;* so make them say in the plural number, God save you, *Salvete, Sitis salvi, jubemus vos salvere, or avete.* So likewise when they can say, I thank you, *Habeo tibi gratiam, or habetur tibi a me gratia,* let them imitate, and alter it by saying, We thank you Father, *Habemus Patri tuo gratiam.* My Mother thanks you, Sir. *Mater habet tibi gratiam, Domine, or Habetur tibi, Domine, a matre*

57) In John W. Adamson, *A Short History of Education* (Cambridge, 1919), 168–9.

*mea gratia.*⁵⁸⁾

Hoole's own version of Gallus' *Pueriles Confabulatiunculæ* (1659) contained both English and Latin sides, in parallel columns:

Æmilia the mother, and Battus *Æmilia mater, Battus filius*
the son.

Æ	My child Battus, my child, my Battus.	<i>Batte fils, mi fili, mi Batte.</i>
B	What would you?	<i>Quid vis?</i>
Æ	It is time to rise.	<i>Est tempus surgendi.</i>
B	I pray you let me rest mee a little longer	<i>Sine me obsecro, adbue paululum requiescere.</i>
Æ	You have sleep enough. Get up my good boy.	<i>Dormium est satis. Surge, mi fili.</i>
B	How many hours have I slept?	<i>Quot horas dormivi?</i>
Æ	Almost ten, over long. Etc.	<i>Ferme decem, nimium diu.</i>

The dialogues in such texts were to be memorized and repeated, and one or two days a week were "recitation days" when assigned passages or dialogues were "heard" by the teacher. In 1712 in the Boston Latin School, Thursdays and Fridays were recitation days.⁵⁹⁾ The strong grammatical base of these dialogues provided the pupil with ready-made models of Latin constructions.

Hoole had many ways of exploiting the colloquy. For example: "Let

58) Hoole, *op. cit.* 50–51.

59) Midlekauff, *op. cit.* 85.

them all lay aside their books, save one, and let him read the Colloquie out of Latine into English, clause by clause, and let the rest give it him again into Latine, every man saying it round as it comes to his turn".⁶⁰⁾ Alternatively, using Castilion's dialogues of the Bible, which was in use in Boston in 1752,⁶¹⁾ one student might read the English while the others provided the Latin as an oral response, converting it clause by clause.

As the titles (e.g., *Sententiae Pueriles*) of the textbooks suggest, dialogues were primarily used in the first two years of Latin study, to supplement the introduction to grammar. This format was clearly followed in New England because all the established English texts, in various editions, were in circulation in Boston during the seventeenth century, and indeed many continued in use to the end of the eighteenth.

(d) Prosody

The final stage of oral work was *prosodia* or correct pronunciation. Pronunciation was difficult to place in the Renaissance curriculum, but most writers followed Lily and offered it as the fourth and final part of grammar. As noted above, the pupil was early on introduced to the basic syllable-ordered structure of Latin; now he was offered the complexities of phonetics, which in Renaissance thinking consisted of rules for pronunciation. Lily distinguished *Spirits, Tones or Accents*, and *Time or Quantity of Syllables*. The pupil was given rules such as, "Words that end in A are long; as, Amá, contrá, ergá. There were two purposes to *prosodia*, the most obvious of which was correct pronunciation. The second was that it prepared the student for Latin verse, since it led directly to scansion, for example of hexameters. Hoole had recommended that the stu-

60) Hoole, *op. cit.*, 68.

61) Holmes, *op. cit.*, 326.

dent should write out a verse of hexameters, and then mark them for time or quantity in every foot:

Sí Dēūs ést ānī·mūs nó·bís út·cārminā ·dícúnt. (´ = long and ¨ = short)

When the student had done this and further exercises on hexameters, he was to learn to say one verse each day “till they can say them all very well by heart, and give a perfect account of any thing in them”.⁶²⁾ *Prosodia* therefore acted as an advanced phonetics course, while continuing to build up structures and expand vocabulary, and acting as an introduction to Latin verse.

(e) Translation

Translation was the defining act of the learning of Latin in the schools of New England. It carried deep historical connotations because of the relatively recent debates in Europe on the translatability of the sacred texts, and was therefore not to be approached lightly.⁶³⁾ Pedagogically it resonated with some of the oldest traditions of teaching, and Kelly has asserted that “the history of language teaching is dominated by translation”.⁶⁴⁾ Kelly has also described the earlier history of this teaching method,⁶⁵⁾ some parts of which inevitably intruded upon the methods adopted by teachers in Boston and elsewhere. These methods appear to have been something of an amalgam of the older “construe and parse” approach on the one hand, and of the newer methods of the sixteenth century reformers such as Brinsley and Hoole on the other. Regardless

62) Hoole, *op. cit.* 77.

63) Vivian Salmon, “Views on Meaning in 16th-century England”. In P. Schmitter (Ed.) *Essays Towards a History of Semantics* (Münster, 1990), 33–53.

64) Kelly, *op. cit.* 171.

65) Kelly, *op. cit.* 132–135 and 171–180.

of the progressive or reactionary inclinations of his master, the New England schoolboy was likely to spend considerable time translating from Latin into English, or vice versa.

Since the schoolboy was rapidly acquiring control of the rules of Latin, these could be used — possibly in the second year of study — for construing and parsing. The translated words would then be re-ordered into natural language, whether Latin or English. Dictionary use was common, indeed necessary. This basic method was frequently supplemented by the process of double translation — usually associated with Roger Ascham who had set out its basic methodology in 1570. Robert Middlekauff gives a synopsis of this method, based on the Journal of the Reverend John Ballantine (1759):

one day he [the student] translated aloud, the next he wrote out his translation, and on the third day he turned his own English version back into Latin in a different tense. He continued all the while to construe and parse and endeavored to fix the many rules of grammar firmly in mind.⁶⁶⁾

These traditional methods of achieving a translation sit rather oddly with the more progressive views and texts which had been available in New England almost from the beginning.

(f) Writing

The word “writing” encompasses both the physical and intellectual aspects, and it should not be forgotten just how recently the physical side had dominated. The arrival of printing had ended the scribes’ monopoly on writing, and Moran records a quote from as late as 1519 in England that “Pryntyng hath almooste undone scryveners craft”.⁶⁷⁾

66) Middlekauff, *op. cit.* 83.

67) In Moran, *op. cit.* 52.

When Brinsley wrote in 1622 that one of the aims of the grammar school teaching was to enable the student “To write faire, in Secretarie, Romane, Greeke, Hebrue; as they grow in knowledge of the tongues”,⁶⁸⁾ the significance of “Secretarie” was that it represented vernacular writing at the easiest and most basic level. Even so, being able to write Secretary (a variety of cursive, which had developed in Italy in Cinquecento) was itself an accomplishment that could guarantee steady employment for whomsoever could do it.

In the British grammar school tradition, the ability to write was a condition for entry, and boys unable to do so either had to attend a separate writing school or take instruction from the peripatetic scribes who visited schools.⁶⁹⁾ However, many of the New England Latin schools were so short of students that they often had to take what they could get, and familiarity with writing could not be assumed. Thus Cheever’s *Short Introduction to the Latin Tongue* (Boston, 1713) is prefaced by a section called “Of the Latin Letters, Points, etc.” which, although apparently demonstrating Latin and Greek writing, nevertheless also deals with periods and capital letters, implying that at least some beginning students did not know these basics.

Elementary writing in Latin began with the student acquiring a notebook into which he would copy important words, distiches, phrases, rules and their exceptions, and even longer passages such as whole fables out of Aesop. Hoole constantly advocates use of the notebook for the three or so years under the Usher. In about the fourth year the notebook began to be used as preparation for writing:

68) Brinsley, *A Consolation for our Grammar Schooles* (London, 1622), 56.

69) Foster Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools* (London, 1916), 102.

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Let them cull out the most significant words, and phrases, and write them in a Pocket-book, with figures referring where to finde them in their Authour; and let them ever and anon be conning these by heart, because these (of all others) will stand them in most stead for speaking Latine, or writing Colloquies and Epistles.⁷⁰⁾

Epistles (letters) were the first major writing challenge in Latin, in about the fourth year of study. At first the student was given examples out of Cicero in English and Latin:

*M. T. C. Terentie, Salutem
plurimam dicit.*

Mark Tully Cicero, sendeth hearty
commendations to (his wife)

Terentia.

Si vales, bene est, ego valeo.

If you be in good health, it is well; I am in good health.

*Nos quotidie tabellarios vestros expectamus, qui si venerint, fortasse erimus
certiores, quid nobis faciendum sit, faciemusque te statim certiozem.*

We everyday expect your Letter-posts: who if they come, we shall be perhaps more certain, what we are to do, and we will certifie you forthwith.⁷¹⁾

Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares*, from which this comes, was present in Boston from at least 1683/4⁷²⁾ and would have constituted an important resource of well-phrased letters for imitation. Typically the student would write two epistles a week, one in response to the other. Alterna-

70) Hoole, *op. cit.* 139.

71) Hoole, *op. cit.* 146–7.

72) Holmes, *op. cit.* 326.

tively, either the teacher or the students would provide an epistle requiring a response, but in any case the Ciceronian style was to be carefully reproduced, and originality was frowned upon.⁷³⁾ The letters themselves did not have to be all that long, or conveying particularly weighty material, but they did have to be correct: “great heed should be taken in the composing of them”.⁷⁴⁾ When the students became adept at writing letters in the approved Ciceronian style, they might “strive to get more liberty of expressing their mindes by learning to vary one and the same phrase both in English and Latine”,⁷⁵⁾ aided by a dictionary such as Erasmus’ *De Copia Verborum*. The attention given to the writing of letters in both English and Latin reinforces the idea that part of the Latin school education was to produce people useful to the community in daily affairs, as well as potential university men and leaders of society. Such people should also be thorough and methodical, as can be seen in Hoole’s insistence that students should not move on to “free” letter writing before they had become complete masters of the “controlled” type.⁷⁶⁾

As the students progressed with their studies, writing became more and more important. In the fifth year they began writing “themes”, that is, compositions or essays. Here many of the sub-skills mentioned above came together. A basic theme would be given by the master (e.g., *Omnia vincit amor*, which Locke had strenuously objected to), and after that the students would begin an elaborate period of preparation for the writing

73) “And this I give as a Caution both in speaking and writing Latine, that they never utter or write any words or phrases, which they are not sure they have read or heard used in the same sense, that they intend them”. Hoole, *op. cit.* 151.

74) Hoole, *op. cit.* 156.

75) Hoole, *op. cit.* 152.

76) Hoole, *op. cit.* 156.

itself: (a) checking in their notebooks for all relevant sayings, quotations, epithets, and so forth; (b) collecting these in a fresh section of the notebook; (c) pooling these materials in groups under the master's direction; (d) visiting the library for additional materials, particularly from dictionaries; (e) finding suitable patterns and formulae to imitate; (f) writing the whole theme in English, (g) translating the English into Latin, and finally (h) saying it *memoriter* for the master and the class.

The culminating point — the recitation of the theme in Latin — was in place in the 1712 curriculum of the Boston Latin School, demonstrating the importance attached to spoken as well as written ability in the language. The best themes may have been selected for public performance, as indicated in Nathaniel Williams' account: "Every fortnight they compose a Theme, & now & then turn a Theme into a Declamation the last quarter of the year".⁷⁷⁾ Certainly since at least 1813 there has been a tradition of public declamation at the Boston Latin School.⁷⁸⁾

(g) Other Materials

Dictionaries were a necessary part of Latin teaching in New England, but their application in the classroom was different from today. Beginning students typically did not have or use dictionaries as modern ones do; instead they made use of lexicons or nomenclatures, both of which were collections of words based on subject areas. These *nomenclatura* presented words in convenient groups, for example "herbs" or "trees", and of course the student from the beginning of his study began to keep his own

77) Nathaniel Williams' account of the curriculum of the Boston Latin School, 1712. In Holmes, *op. cit.* 260.

78) Paul W. Salterio, "Public Declamation: A Latin School tradition". Unpublished Ms., 1968, 3.

personal notebook, which soon began to function as a dictionary. The *Nomenclatora brevis Anglo-Latino-Graeca* (1675) by Francis Gregory of Westminster School in London was used in the Boston Latin School from at least 1683/4 onwards, and was still on the books in 1789.⁷⁹⁾

Whether or not beginners used a wordbook seems to have depended on financial considerations just as much as on academic ones. For example, Hoole had advocated Comenius' *Orbis pictus* ("a most rare device for Teaching of a Childe at once to know things and words by pictures"⁸⁰⁾), the picture dictionary Comenius had first published in 1658. Unfortunately this book had the major drawback of being expensive, almost certainly because of the very things that made it so useful — its illustrations. Apart from expense, there was also very little opportunity in the early years for dictionary use, because of the intense focus on Latin grammar. Whenever beginning students did use small dictionaries, it was for the purpose set out by Hoole who had advocated their use at the beginning stages, but mainly for writing:

To help the young beginners to avoid Barbarismes, and Anglicismes... you may make use of a *little Dictionary English and Latine in Octavo*, which resolves the difficulties of Translating either way,⁸¹⁾

Although Hoole comments on "the difficulties of Translating either way", the fact that almost all the recorded dictionaries were from English into Latin shows that Latin was being taught primarily, or even totally, in English.

Full-size alphabetical dictionaries became useful as the student advanced in his studies. Robert Estienne's *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (1531), Tho-

79) Holmes, *op. cit.* 337.

80) Hoole, *op. cit.* 6

81) Hoole, *op. cit.* 154.

mas Cooper's *Thesaurus linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (1565), William Walker's *Idiomatologia Anglo-Latina* (1670), Francis Gouldman's *A Copious Dictionary* (1678), Adam Littleton's *Linguae Latinae Liber Dictionarius Quadripartus* (1678, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and English), John Withals' *A Dictionary in English and Latine* (1554), and Robert Ainsworth's *Thesaurus linguae Latinae compendiarius* (1736) were all present in colonial New England.⁸²⁾ Such dictionaries were generally placed in the school library, and were used mainly by the senior students for their Latin writing, for example in the finding of synonyms to add variety to their themes. The study of other languages required even more detailed dictionary use: Brinsley had advocated the use of dictionaries in writing Greek, and for the study of Hebrew — “for giving the Hebrue words to the Latine”.⁸³⁾

(h) Testing

Teachers checked their students' progress in reading, recitation, translating, and so forth almost daily in English Grammar Schools and in New England Latin schools. Hence the familiar picture of the teacher seated at his desk “hearing” the boys saying their lessons, usually with a stick or birch conveniently to hand. Testing was therefore “ongoing” rather than formalized, except at one significant point in the schoolboy's life.

That point came after three years' study under the Usher or lower teacher, in those schools that were rich enough to afford this luxury.⁸⁴⁾ The Master had to be satisfied as to the competence of the students coming up to him, since his program of study and reading assumed that the whole grammar had been mastered. Hoole set the idea out:

82) Holmes, *op. cit.* 335–338.

83) Brinsley, *op. cit.* 76.

84) Holmes, *op. cit.* 256 shows that Boston Latin had an usher from 1666.

It is necessary therefore for the Master, before he take Scholars to his onely charge, to see first, that they understand the Rudiments, or Grounds of Grammar, and then the whole Grammar it self, and that they can thorowly practice them,⁸⁵⁾

The basic testing method was to give the student a piece of familiar Latin, such as something out of Aesop. He would then write it out in English, leaving double spaces between each line. Into the empty lines he would put the Latin words, though their order in Latin would necessarily be "wrong". Next the student should "tell" which English word connected with which Latin word (as in *Tunc senex ait...* = Then the old man saith...), starting with the nouns and continuing through each subsequent class of words. Next the student would be quizzed on each word, as follows:

(M.) What part of speech is *Lignorum* of sticks(?)

(S.) *Lignorum* of sticks, is a Noun.

(M.) Why is *Lignorum* a Noun?

(S.) Because *lignum* a stick is the name of a thing that may be seen.

(M.) Whether is *lignorum* a noun Substantive, or a noun Adjective?

(S.) *Lignorum* is a noun Substantive, because it can stand by it self in signification, and requireth not another word to be joyned with it, to shew its signification.⁸⁶⁾

In this way the student had to account for literally every word, quoting rules as necessary to justify his explanation.

The student was tested in this manner also on Orthography and Prosodia. He should be able to

85) Hoole, *op. cit.* 83.

86) Hoole, *op. cit.* 87.

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give you an account of every letter, and syllable, and note of distinction, according to the Rules of Orthography, and of every Accent that he meeteth withall, as also of the Spirits and Quantities of Syllables, according to the Rules of *Prosodia*.⁸⁷⁾

For example, the student might select or be given a line of a dialogue to be written out in correct spelling, and then divided into syllables. Here is a dialogue between the Serpent and Eve as a student might have written it out:

S(erpens). Cur ve-tu-it vos De-us ve-sci ex o-mni-bus ar-bo-ribus po-ma-ri-i?

The first question might be why *Deus* is written with a capital letter. The correct answer would be: “Proper names, beginnings of Sentences, and words more eminent than others, are to begin with a great letter”. Next he might be asked why he had decided on *ve-sci* rather than *ves-ci*, to which he should answer that “consonants which can be joyned in the beginning of a word must not be parted in the middle of it”.⁸⁸⁾ Punctuation was examined in a similar way, as well as the meanings of the acute, grave, and circumflex accents.

Each word of the selection was then to be parsed, and the good student might say:

Deus is a Noun Substantive Common, of the Singular number; Nominative case, Masculine Gender... of the second Declension, Sing. Nom. *hic Deus*, Gen. *hujus Dei*, etc. It maketh its Vocative case *o Deus*, and wanteth the Plural number...⁸⁹⁾

This comprehensive third-year examination — falling somewhere be-

87) Hoole, *op. cit.* 100.

88) Hoole, *op. cit.* 101.

89) Hoole, *op. cit.* 104.

tween our modern “proficiency” or “achievement” tests — was therefore a test of the student’s knowledge of the four parts of the grammar book, and his ability to apply this knowledge to any appropriate extract. It focused on the rules and their application, and made deep demands on memory. Similarly, the knowledge of vocabulary that was required was deep rather than wide, with more emphasis being placed on grammatical inflections than on semantic aspects of a word. His pronunciation and knowledge of written conventions was also tested. No doubt considerable variation existed from school to school as to what constituted a pass in this exam, and the Master probably exercised his discretion in determining who should enter his classes. On the other hand, many students dropped out at this point and moved to the working world. Those who continued began a broad reading in the Classical authors and thus completed what the first three years had begun.

4. AVE ATQUE VALE

In this paper the first three years of Latin have been dealt with in some detail. By way of a summary and brief synopsis of the remaining three years, the account by Middlekauff pertaining to the year 1712 is here reproduced. Square brackets have been added to specify the aim of each text.

Around 1712 at the Boston Latin School boys spent their first three years with Master Nathaniel Williams memorizing Cheever’s *Accidence* [grammar] and a nomenclature [vocabulary expansion], besides construing and parsing *Sententiae Pueriles*, Cato’s *Disticha* Corderius [both for oral/reading pairwork] and Aesop’s *Fables* [reader]. In the fourth year they began Erasmus [pairwork/reader] with the help of a dictionary and an *accidence* but with no English translation. They also parsed according to the rules in William Lily’s *Grammar*, began Ovid’s *De tristibus* [poetry] and wrote Latin from Garretson’s

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Exercises [grammar]. They also learned the rules of prosody, scanned some of the verse they read, and then, awkwardly one may suppose, turned to the making of their own verses. In the sixth year they encountered their first historian, Lucius Florus, as well as Cicero's *De officiis* [prose] and Virgil [poetry]. Style now became important: students noted the figures used in these works and attempted to incorporate them in the dialogues they wrote on Fridays. Late in the year they tried their hands at writing letters in Latin once a week. And, if this were not enough for any boy, they began Greek and rhetoric. Their seventh and last year was similarly crowded: they read in Latin Cicero's *Orationes* [public oratory], Homer, and Hesiod [both Greek poetry]. Using Thomas Godwin's *Romance Historiae Anthologia* [history] each boy translated a dialogue on Mondays and Tuesdays, on Wednesdays the same but from Horace [Latin poetry]; the mornings of recitation days, Thursdays and Fridays, they wrote dialogues from William Walker's *Treatise of English Particles...* and in the afternoon turned a psalm or "something Divine" into Latin verse. They also wrote themes every two weeks and near the end of the year turned them into declamations.⁹⁰⁾

History was a recognized and often required part of higher Latin studies, and no student was likely to finish the pre-university course without encountering one of the standard treatments, such as Florus' *History of Rome* or Justin's *Roman History*. Both these texts were used in New England in the eighteenth century, as were the works of Eutropius. In the nineteenth century Sallust, Nepos, Phaedrus, and Livy were added.⁹¹⁾

The English Grammar Schools and the best of the New England Latin schools gave their students an unparalleled language learning experience. It has been remarked that, contrary to common belief, it was an extraordinarily wide curriculum, embracing "poetry, drama, biography, history, political theory, geography, ethnography, philosophy, logic, ethics, rheto-

90) Middlekauff, *op. cit.* 84–5.

91) Holmes, *op. cit.*, 334.

ric, architecture".⁹²⁾ Even allowing for the hardships of Colonial New England, those students who completed the course and progressed to Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, or one of the half-dozen other institutions that were founded up to the Revolution, had been carefully instructed in all aspects of the Latin language and literature, and had varying degrees of knowledge about Greek.

As a language learning experience, the Latin curriculum was marked by its thoroughness, its rigor, and its accompanying moral tone. There was a unity of purpose, methodology, and achievement which has not since been equaled, particularly in the elementary stages that have been the subject of this paper. By modern standards, the approach to language and language teaching in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was charmingly simple, yet the achievement commands our respect and invites debate. The fact that from about 1800 social and political changes took place which rendered a Classical education inadequate to the demands of the new Republic should not blind contemporary language teachers to the greatness of the achievement.

92) Sheldon Rothblatt, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education*, (London, 1976), 40.