



PIE Women's Collective

Progressive Pedagogy Series II

Teaching Ancient Languages
Communicatively

with Daniela Negro
January 30th, 2026





Teaching Ancient Languages Communicatively

Welcome!

- Introducing the Collective and the Progressive Pedagogy Series
- From Daniela: The How and Why of the Communicative Method
- Q&A

You will be able to interact throughout the Webinar by using the **chat function**

About the Collective and the Progressive Pedagogy Series





Introducing the Collective

Our Goals

- The **PIE Women's Collective** is the first organization to promote gender equity in IE studies
- We started in March 2024 with nine founding members
- Our goals are to **create community** for women and other members of underrepresented groups in our field
- and to **create and share useful resources** for anybody interested



Introducing the Collective

Our Offerings

- On top of organizing **in-person events**
- We have a full calendar of **online offerings**:
- **Monthly Hang-Outs** for graduate students in IE Studies
- **Academic Writing Series** (Writing Effective Abstracts etc.)
- **Progressive Pedagogy Series**
- more to come!



If you aren't already
subscribed to our mailing
list, please consider
doing so!



Introducing the Collective

The Progressive Pedagogy Series

- We believe that one of the most important challenges for the future of the field is to **find new and more effective ways of teaching** ancient languages and historical linguistics
- This first meeting: Individual Study (with Sherrylyn Branchaw)
- This meeting: **Teaching Ancient Languages Communicatively** (with Daniela Negro)
- And next up: **Progressive Methods for Teaching IE Linguistics** (and many more!)



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Introducing our Speaker

Daniela Negro

- Daniela studied Classics (BA and MA) at the Università Cattolica di Milano and subsequently earned a PhD in Classical Philology at the Università degli Studi di Salerno.
- She has since been teaching Greek and Latin (among other subjects) in private and public schools in Italy.
- She currently teaches at the Liceo Enrico Fermi in Cantù.
- Daniela and I recently co-authored a paper on Communicative Methods for teaching Greek and Latin



Chiara Bozzone and Daniela Negro. 2025. When Learning Greek and Latin became hard, and what we can do about it, *Res Difficiles* 2.1.36-71.



Daniela Negro

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Teaching Ancient Languages Communicatively

Roadmap

- Who am I?
- How did I come to teach in this way?
- Why do I think this method is effective?
- What do I do concretely in the class?
- Question time!

Who am I?





Who am I? Education

- Interested in Classics since before I can remember
- **Typical Italian education in the Humanities:** Liceo Classico and then BA, MA and PhD in Classics
- Studied with a **very conservative, Grammar and Translation method.**



Who am I?

My work as a teacher

- I started teaching full time in 2008
- Mostly in **Scuole Superiori** (high school, 14 to 19 years)
- Mostly in **Licei** (highly motivated students, usually proficient in academic tasks, likely to continue their education in Universities)
- Structure of Italian high schools: same subjects, with the same classmates, for everyone (→ students are not always interested in every single subject)

**How did I come to teach
communicatively?**





How did I come to teach communicatively?

How did I start?

- I started pursuing the communicative method basically out of **desperation**.
- I started private tutoring in 2002, and teaching high school in 2008: I taught using the only method I knew: **grammar and translation**
- My students **did everything they were supposed to, and yet they kept failing**
 - they knew the grammar, but could not understand simple texts.
 - they memorized vocabulary lists, but could not remember them when they found them in context
 - they did not develop an appreciation for Latin as a language and for Latin literature
 - they felt generally miserable in class



How did I come to teach communicatively?

The turning point

- 2020-2021 lockdowns: I had lots of spare time, and I needed to **rethink my pedagogy** for online teaching
- I stumbled upon a seminar on communicative methods (I had heard about them but had not really looked into them, partly out of prejudice)
- A lightbulb moment: **this was how it is meant to be done**. This had to work!
- I started experimenting, then I undertook some **additional training** as a communicative teacher



How did I come to teach communicatively? Where I am now

- Latin teacher for the **Liceo Linguistico** (few hours per week and relatively unmotivated students)
- Greek teacher for the **Liceo Classico** (lots of time and very motivated students, but I cannot go fully communicative)
- I have the opportunity to **compare the two approaches** directly.

**Why do I think
this method is effective?**





Why do I think this method is effective?

Approach and motivation

- Do students still learn **grammar and vocabulary** with this method?
 - Yes, they learn just as much grammar (maybe leaving out marginal exceptions) and a LOT more vocabulary
- Does this method **make more sense to them and does it feel easier?**
 - Yes!
 - This is how they are used to studying modern languages
 - The main focus is not grammatical theory, but language comprehension
- They start reading texts right away, and see **texts as a texts, not as complicated puzzles**



Why do I think this method is effective?

A few words on inclusivity

- This method presents students with a great **variety of stimuli and targeted activities** (e.g., conversation, text comprehension, writing, etc.)
- Everyone can find **something they are good at**
- The Grammar and Translation method can be especially challenging for students with some **learning disabilities** (such as dyslexia).
 - A communicative approach uses multiple types of media (not just written texts)
 - it trains students to figure out the meaning of a sentence even if they don't recognize each single word.

What do I do in class? (a few tips)





What do I do in class?

Some general tips

- It's **difficult to go totally communicative**, unless you have students who are
 - Not too many
 - Highly motivated
 - Have a solid knowledge of basic syntax (e.g., subject vs. object, noun vs. verb, etc.)
 - (this might be your situation in some universities)
- Good news is - you don't have to go totally communicative: **experimentation is the key!**
- **"Something is better than nothing"**
 - If you have to choose one thing, **aim for vocabulary!**



What do I do in class?

Some general tips

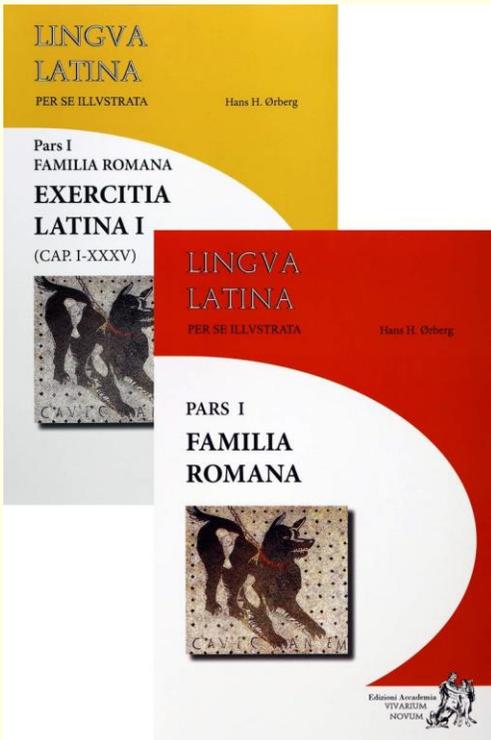
- Basic structure of a lesson:
 - **Praelectio:** quick explanation of new vocabulary and grammatical rules – always in context!
 - **Reading** on the same topics (this can be skipped)
 - **Active learning**



What do I do in class?

Textbook and materials

- Basic textbook: H.H. Ørberg's *Lingua Latina per se illustrata*



CAPITVLVM SECVNDVM CAP. II

IVLIVS

MARCVS QVINTVS

AEMILIA

IVLIA

SYRA DELIA DAVVS MEDVS

FAMILIA ROMANA

1 Iūlius vir Rōmānus est. Aemilia fēmina Rōmāna est. Marcus est puer Rōmānus. Quintus quoque puer Rōmānus est. Iūlia est puella Rōmāna.

2 Marcus et Quintus nōn virī, sed puerī sunt. Virī sunt

5 Iūlius et Mēdus et Dāvus. Aemilia et Dēlia et Syra sunt fēminae. Estne fēmina Iūlia? Nōn fēmina, sed parva puella est Iūlia.

Iūlius, Aemilia, Mārcus, Quīntus, Iūlia, Syra, Dāvus, Dēlia Mēdusque sunt familia Rōmāna. Iūlius pater est. Aemilia est māter. Iūlius pater Mārci et Quīnti est. Iūlius pater Iūliae quoque est. Aemilia est māter Mārci et Quīnti et Iūliae. Mārcus filius Iūlii est. Mārcus filius Aemiliae est. Quīntus quoque filius Iūlii et Aemiliae est. Iūlia est filia Iūlii et Aemiliae.

15 Quis est Mārcus? Mārcus puer Rōmānus est. Quis pater Mārci est? Iūlius pater Mārci est. Quae est māter

ūnus (I) vir
duo (II) virī
ūnus puer
duo puerī

-que = et —: Mēdus-que = et Mēdus

Iūlius	∞	Aemilia
pater		māter

Mārcus Quintus Iūlia
filius filius filia

quis? quae?
quis est Mārcus?
quae est Iūlia?
quis est pater Mārci?
quae est māter Mārci?



What do I do in class?

Textbook and materials

- Other reading materials:
 - Many good books, such as M. Mead's *Iulia*, can be found online for free
 - *Vivarium novum* has a good list of free materials, alongside with exercises and videos paced to Ørberg's book: <https://subsidia.vivariumnovum.it/risorse-didattiche>
- Youtube videos:
 - Scorpio Martianus
 - Magister Craft



What do I do in class?

Example 1: intuitive grammar

- Vocabulary is known, or easily understandable from images
- Have them focus: why *Iulia/Iuliam*?
- A suggestion (from Ørberg): work by case, not by declension

Scaena prima



What do I do in class?

Example 2: describe the image

- Basic level: ask students to name things in Latin and give them more words
- From given questions (*ubi sumus? Quid agit vir?*)
- Write freely
- Tell a story from a series of images





What do I do in class?

Example 3: multiply & divide the tasks

- Traditional test (Italian high school): 12 lines of texts to translate with, sometimes, a few grammar or comprehension questions.
- We use translation as the one and only proof of everything
- A few ideas for **what to do instead**:
 - The questions can be a good start, use them!
 - Multiply the tasks: a few closed questions to test for text comprehension, translating a part of the text, modifying some others (e.g., convert a verbal form from present to future, from active to passive)
- Once again, this way it is easier for students to **find at least one activity they are good at**



What do I do in class?

Example 3: multiply & divide the tasks

Nome e Cognome	11	Data
----------------	----	------

VERIFICA SCRITTA DI LATINO

Lege fabulam quae hic scripta est et fac pensa

Ānulus Iūliae (cap. I-III; 1 ora)

Iūlia, domina ancillārum, Melittam, ancillam suam probam, vocat. Melitta, quae eam audit, venit.

Iūliam Melitta interrogat: "Quid est, domina?"

Iūlia: "Ō Melitta, mea proba ancilla: ubi est ānulus meus?" Iūlia ānulum suum nōn videt.

Melitta nōn respondet. Cūr Melitta nōn respondet? Melitta nōn respondet, quia ānulus in sacculō Dēliae est! Dēlia, quae ānulum in sacculō habet, ancilla improba est.

Melitta: "Ānulus tuus hīc nōn est, domina."

Iūlia: "Ubi est Dēlia?"

Melitta: "Dēlia dormit."

Iūlia: "Quid? dormit?"

Dēlia laeta cantat: "Lalla, lalla." Domina eam audit: "Dēlia nōn dormit, sed cantat!" Iūlia, quae irāta est, Dēliam vocat: "Dēlia!"

Dēlia, quae dominam irātam audit, iam nōn cantat, neque rīdet. Dēlia venit; Dēlia, quam Melitta videt sed domina nōn videt, ancillam interrogat: "Cūr mē domina vocat?"

Melitta respondet: "Domina tē vocat, quia ānulus in sacculō tuō est. Cuius est ānulus, Dēlia? Num tuus est?" Dēlia nōn respondet, sed ānulum in lectō dominae pōnit. Iam ānulus in dominae lectō est.

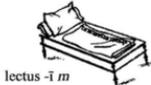
Iūlia, quae iam videt Dēliam sed ānulum in lectō nōn videt, eam interrogat: "Ubi est ānulus meus, Dēlia?"

Dēlia: "Ecce ānulus tuus, domina. Ānulus in lectō tuō est."

Iūlia, quae iam ānulum videt, laeta est. Sed Dēlia nōn est laeta, quia ānulum nōn iam in sacculō suō habet. Melitta laeta est et rīdet. Cūr Melitta laeta est? Melitta laeta est, quia ancilla proba est.



ānulus -ī m



lectus -ī m



sacculus (m)

ponere =



Verumne an falsum? Falsa corrige! (pt. ____/7,5, max 1,5/sententia)

Melittae domina Iulia est.	V	F
Delia filia Iuliae est.	V	F
Iulia anulum Melittae non videt.	V	F
Iulia et Delia ancillae improbae sunt.	V	F
Melitta anulum dominae non habet.	V	F
Delia non audit, quia dormit.	V	F
Delia anulum in lecto ponit.	V	F

In principiō, ubi est anulus?

- In sacculō Deliae
- In sacculō Melittae
- In lectō Iuliae
- In lectō Deliae

Quae est domina anuli?

- Delia
- Iulia
- Melitta

Cūr Iulia irata est?

- Quia Melitta hic non est
- Quia anulum suum videt
- Quia Delia anulum habet
- Quia Delia non venit

Cūr Delia venit?

- Quia domina eam videt
- Quia domina eam vocat
- Quia dominam videt
- Quia Melitta eam vocat

In fine, ubi est anulus?

- In sacculō Deliae
- In sacculō Melittae
- In lectō Iuliae
- In lectō Deliae

Responde ad interrogata (pt. ____/13,5, max. 1,5/sententia)

Quae est domina ancillarum?	
Quam ancillam domina interrogat?	
Dormitne Delia?	
Cur Delia ancilla improba est?	
Cur Delia laeta cantat?	
Quam Delia interrogat?	
Cuius est anulus?	
Cur Iulia Deliam interrogat?	
Cur Iulia laeta est?	

Pone pronomen rectum: qui, quae, quem aut quam (pt. ____/8)

Anulus _____ in lecto est Iuliae est.

Ancilla _____ cantat Delia est.

Anulus _____ Iulia non videt magnus est.

Domina _____ Melitta amat Iulia est.

Iulia vocat ancillam, _____ venit.

Delia ponit anulum in lectō _____ Iuliae est.

Lectus _____ Iuliae est magnus est.

Anulus est in sacculō _____ Deliae est.

PT. TOT. ____/34

VOTO ____/10

Rispetto alle mie aspettative, la verifica era...

- Molto facile
- Abbastanza facile
- Abbastanza difficile
- Molto difficile

Q&A

We'll start with a few questions by Jessica DeLisi

Jessica has been teaching Latin at an independent secondary school in Los Angeles since 2015, when she finished her Ph.D. at UCLA. She focuses her teaching on building reading competency in Latin through extensive exposure to comprehensible texts and differentiated instructional methods that reach all students where they are.

**What about rigor
and assessment?**



What about rigor and assessment? How do you teach and evaluate grammatical knowledge?

- Rigor is very important to me given my very traditional background.
- It is entirely possible to teach grammar explicitly (as I have briefly demonstrated) within a communicative method. It still helps to do this inductively (e.g., have the students put together a paradigm themselves rather than presenting them with a pre-made one). Similarly, my tests always include some explicit grammatical exercises (e.g., transforming one form into another, filling the blank with the correct inflected form etc.).
- We might want to ask ourselves what is our goal in our teaching is: is it for them to know *about* the grammar of these languages? Or is it to read fluently and engage with the literature? Grammar and Translation will deliver on the first goal, but communicative methods will be more effective at the second.

How is the pacing affected?



How does the pacing of a communicative class differ from a traditional Grammar/Translation class? Do you find that you move more slowly? Does it take longer to approach reading fluency this way?

- The pacing is not faster than a traditional G&T approach, because any time that is saved not talking about grammatical exceptions is devoted to having students use the language actively and improve their vocabulary skills.
- The level of motivation of the students is paramount: with highly-motivated, adult students, I was able to cover the first volume of Ørberg (i.e., all of the grammar apart from the subjunctive) in 70 hours of instruction. In a high school setting, with time devoted to state-mandated testing and students who are less motivated, the pace is slower.
- In my experience reading fluency comes more quickly in this method, as they are reading easy texts from the very beginning, and they spend more time developing their vocabulary skills. Still, the way to reading complex texts from real authors is long.

How can teachers prepare to teach in this way?



Do you worry about speaking “proper” Latin?

- Yes, and speaking Latin in front of a class, at first, was a terrifying experience. But practice helps, and my training helped.
- You become aware of the type of mistakes that you typically make (mine is the syntax of *dum!*) and you can warn the students ahead of time. You can invite them to correct you when they catch you. This helps make them more comfortable with making mistakes, and it can provide a great teaching opportunity. Humor and levity also help.
- Ongoing practice is key: some recommendations are on the next slide.



More resources
at the link above



How can teachers prepare to teach this way?

- My experience with training: six months, 2-4 hours per week. Both language and pedagogy. I studied with GrecoLatinoVivo (<https://www.grecolatinovivo.it>)
- How to improve your skills, or keep them sharp:
 - Reading
 - Speaking groups/advanced classes (e.g., *Vivarium Novum*, *Speaking Latin*)
 - Youtube videos:
 - Scorpio Martianus
 - Magister Craft
 - GrecoLatinoVivo
 - Saturalanx



More resources
at the link above

Q&A

Type your questions in the chat

Thank You!

We'll send you a follow-up email over the next week with slides from the meeting.

