

Teaching the Text: Integrating Paleography and Textual Criticism with Introductory Language Instruction

The increasing absence of the text in its material context in undergraduate and even graduate language instruction is a pressing pedagogical issue. Undergraduate students are often not introduced to the idea of manuscript transmission or textual criticism until they reach their final instructive years, and that instruction seeks to broadly familiarize students with the concepts at issue with little consideration as to the effect these practices have on the student's engagement with the text itself. Introductory language classes suffer from a frequent disregard for the physical text and its history in their instruction. Rather, language instruction is processed through a series of edited and predigested media, namely textbooks and grammars, that while effective at communicating grammar and syntax efficiently to the student also isolate the student from the idea of the language as a representation of culture and historicity, both through the texts themselves and by the selective transmission of such texts. This project examines the effect of the lack of textual awareness in elementary language instruction, avenues to remedy this issue (namely the pedagogical case study outlined below) and the benefits to the early incorporation of these concepts to long term philological study.

The most apparent difficulty in teaching material texts in an introductory language class is time. Collegiate Latin and Greek courses are fast paced with the intention of covering most or all grammatical elements of the language in one academic year. Manuscript studies and paleography are high expertise disciplines with a broad spectrum of skills implicit in their practice. Textual criticism is equally problematic. The *apparatus criticus* has been increasingly criticized as elitist and archaic for the institutional knowledge and skill required to interpret it, much less to make use of it in a translation setting. (Dué 2019) Even the proponents of the

apparatus acknowledge the difficulties inherent in its use. (Huskey 2019, Keeline 2017) Given these difficulties, the purpose of such an introduction is less to produce a competent paleographer and textual critic than to give students an awareness of the historical context of ancient texts and the factors which effect the representation of certain texts in present day scholarship.

During the 2022 fall semester, the University of Iowa Classics department implemented a 2-part curriculum intent on fostering a preliminary relationship between Latin 1 and 2 students and the material text. Latin 1 students engaged in a two-day unit in which they visited the university's special collections and studied a selected list of texts. Texts chosen for this class place an emphasis on uncorrupted texts, clear hands, and plain, often ecclesiastical Latin. Students transcribed a 5-line passage from selected texts to be translated in preparation for the following class. Day 2 consisted of a discussion of the students' experience transcribing and translating a primary text, and the differences between this experience and that of translating an edited text. The Latin 1 unit is intended to familiarize the student with the principles of *recensio*. Latin 2 students participated in another 2-day unit, the first of which was also spent in special collections. Texts for this class were chosen for their textual difficulties – illegible hands, emendation, water or smoke damage, etc. Students were similarly asked to transcribe an assigned 5-line passage, this time with a textual issue present, to be translated in advance of the second day. Day 2 was a discussion of the students' experiences translating the assigned passages, identification of the textual problems and the students' attempts to resolve the problems. The Latin 2 unit is intended to familiar the student with the principles of *editio* and *emendatio*.

Works Cited

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