

A Course in

L A T I N

Offered in the curricula of the
Chair of Greek Studies

A.L. Katonis

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

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Introductory Remarks

Elementa Latina – The Latin Alphabet

1. The Latin alphabet has the following letters :

A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T V X Y Z

In detail

<u>Letters:</u>	<u>Names:</u>	<u>Letters:</u>	<u>Names:</u>
A a	a	N n	en
B b	be	O o	o
C c	ce	P p	pe
D d	de	Q q	cu
E e	e	R r	er
F f	ef	S s	es
G g	ge	T t	te
H h	ha	U u	u
I i	i	(V v	ve) ¹
K k	ka	X x	ex/ix
L l	el	Y y	i(/ü) ²
M m	em	Z z	zēta

¹ The resolution of "u" into two letters (*u* for vowel, *v* for consonant before vowels) goes back to middle ages.

² For "y" the sound was used. This letter was pronounced usually as [i], but the educated, in a demanding usage, often pronounced [ü], i.e. the closed rounded front vowel, as was the value of Greek ypsilon assumed for classical times. The phonetic symbol for this pronunciation is [y].

As clearly can be seen, the letters of the Latin alphabet (*elementa* or *litterae*) are much the same as in English (English added only the letter *w*), and are of Greek origin. The Greek origin is clear like with A, B, M, N, and others, and also in other cases, where the shape is the same but the value differs like with H and X. The letters K, Y and Z are considered "foreign" to Latin: they are used mainly in words of Greek origin like *Kalendae*, *gymnasium* or *zona*.

Earlier scholarship considered a so-called Western Greek Alphabet to be the immediate origin, whereas modern research arrived at the conclusion that the Latin alphabet is of Etruscan origin. Given that the Etruscans, although their language was completely different both from Greek and Latin, used the Greek alphabet, there is no essential contradiction.³

FURTHER REMARKS.

1. The sounds represented by C and K were originally distinct, C having the sound of G, but they gradually approximated each other, until C supplanted K except in a few words, such as *Kalendae*, *Kaeso*, which were usually

abbreviated, *Kal.*, *K.* The original force of C is retained only in *C.* (for *Gāius*) and *Cn.* (for *Gnaeus*).

2. J, the consonantal form of I, dates from the middle ages. v represented also the vowel u in the Latin alphabet; and its resolution into two letters V

for the consonant, and U for the vowel also dates from the middle ages.

For convenience, V and U are still distinguished in this grammar.

³ The Etruscans played an important role, culturally and linguistically, in the early history of the Italian peninsula. They were one of the mediators of the Greek culture to the populations of early Italy. The Etruscan golden age can be put into the 7th–6th cent. B.C. Their territory coincides with modern Toscana, having Rome at its southernmost edge. With the Roman expansion their language and culture were gradually driven into the background, and by the Roman Republican Times they vanished almost entirely. Of their language ritual texts and inscriptions exist.

Origins of population and language are not satisfactorily explained. Roman tradition has the defeated Trojans as the ancestors of the Romans, and tries to connect them to the Etruscans, whom they called by various similar names: *Tusci*, *Etrusci*, *Tyrrhenoi* (part of which is attested also in Greek, e.g. *Τυρρηνοί*), i.e. *Tyrrhenians*, etc. In literature, it is Vergil with his epic *Aeneis* who tells the story in an elaborated form. Linguistically, the element – *tr-* (to be found also in the name *Troy* and in Latin *turris* 'tower', Greek *τύρσις* 'id.')

might be a connection. It is assumed that at least *one component* of the Etruscan population must have had its origin in Asia Minor of which Troy was once an important advance guard. The relationship of Etruscan, i.e. if it is Indo-European or not, is similarly an unsolved question. Contemporary research is inclined to think that Etruscan was not an Indo-European language. This writer, personally, thinks that Etruscan may have been a mixed language.

3. Y and Z were introduced in the time of Cicero to transliterate Greek υ and ζ. In early Latin υ was represented by u (occasionally by i or oi), and ζ by ss or s. Z had occurred in the earliest times, but had been lost, and its place in the alphabet taken by G, which was introduced after C acquired the sound of K.

NOTE. The Latin names for the letters were : a, be, ce, de, e, ef, ge, ha, i, ka, el, em, en, o, pe, qu (= cu), er, es, te, u, ex (ix), to be pronounced according to the rules given in 3, 7. For Y the sound was used, for Z the Greek name (zēta).

Vowels.

2. The vowels are a, e, i, o, u, (y) ; and are divided :

1. According to their quality (i.e., the position of the organs used in pronunciation), into guttural (or back), a, o, u ; palatal (or front), e, i, (y).

2. According to their quantity or prolongation (i. e., the time required for pronunciation), into
long, (¯) ; short, (˘).

REMARK. Vowels whose quantity shifts in poetry are called common, and are distinguished thus :

˘, by preference short ; ¨, by preference long.

3. Sounds of the Vowels.

ā = a in father.

ō = o in bone.

ē = e in prey.

ū = oo in moon.

ī = i in caprice.

ÿ = u in sūr (French), German ü.

REMARK. – The short sounds are only less prolonged in pronunciation than the long sounds, and have no exact English equivalents.

Diphthongs.

4. There are but few *diphthongs* or *double sounds* in Latin. The theory of the diphthong requires that both elements be heard in a slur. The tendency in Latin was to reduce diphthongs to simple sounds; for example, in the last century of the republic ae was gliding into ē, which took its place completely in the third century A.D. Hence arose frequent variations in spelling : as glæba and glēba, *sod*; so oboedire and obēdīre, *obey* ; faenum (foenum) and

fēnum, hay.

ae = aye (ăh-eh). ei = ei in feint (drawled).

oe = oy in boy. eu = eu in Spanish deuda (ěh-oo).

au = ou in our. (ui = we, almost).

NOTE. – Before the time of the Gracchi⁴ we find ai and oi instead of ae and oe.

5. The sign ¨ (Diaerësis – Greek = separation) over the second vowel shows that each sound is to be pronounced separately; āë, air; Oenomaüs, aloë.

Consonants.

6. Consonants are divided:

1. According to the principal organs by which they are pronounced, into

Labials (lip-sounds) : b, p, (ph), f, v, m.

Dentals (tooth-sounds): d, t, (th), l, n, r, s.

Gutturals (throat-sounds) : g, c, k, qu, (ch), h, n (see 7).

NOTE. – Instead of dental and guttural, the terms lingual and palatal are often used.

2. According to their prolongation, into

A. Semi-vowels : of which

l, m, n, r, are liquids (m and n being nasals).

h is a breathing.

s is a sibilant.

B. Mutes (also *stops*) : to which belong

P-mutes, p, b, (ph), f, labials.

T-mutes, t, d, (th), dentals.

K-mutes, k, c, qu, g, (ch), gutturals.

Those on the same line are said to be of the same organ.

4. "Gracchi" is the surname of the members of the Sempronius family in the 2nd cent. B.C., to which reputed politicians belonged engaged in social reforms, first of all in agrarian ones.

Mutes are further divided into

Tenuis (thin, smooth) : p, t, k, c, qu, hard (surd).

Mediae (middle) : b, d, g, soft (sonant).

Aspiratae (aspirate, rough): ph, th, ch, (aspirate).

Those on the same line are said to be of the same order.

The aspirates were introduced in the latter part of the second century B. C. in the transliteration of Greek words, and thence extended to some pure Latin words; as, pulcher, Gracchus.

3. Double consonants are : z = dz in adze ; x cs (ks), gs ; i and u between two vowels are double sounds, half vowel, half consonant.

Sounds of the Consonants.

7. The consonants are sounded as in English, with the following exceptions :

C is hard throughout = k.

Ch is not a genuine Latin combination (6, 2). In Latin words it is a k ; in Greek words a kh, commonly pronounced as ch in German.

G is hard throughout, as in get, give.

H at the beginning of a word is but slightly pronounced ; in the middle of a word it is almost imperceptible.

I consonant (J) has the sound of a broad y ; nearly like y in yule.

N has a guttural nasal sound before c, g, q, as in anchor, anguish.

Qu = kw (nearly) ; before o, qu = c. In early Latin qu was not followed by u. Later, when o was weakened to u, qu was replaced by c ; thus quom became cum. Still later qu replaced c, yielding quum.

R is trilled.

S and X are always hard, as in hiss, axe.

T is hard throughout ; never like t in nation.

u consonant (v) is pronounced like the vowel, but with a slur. In the third century A.D. it had nearly the sound of our w. In Greek it was frequently transliterated by Oυ̅ ; so Oυ̅αλέριος = Valerius.

(Cf. to the above: B.L. Gildersleeve – G. Lodge, *Latin Grammar*. London 1903, pp. 3–5).

COURSE BOOK

I

Homines

Agricola laborat: terram arat. Puella magistram salutatur. Amicae intrant. Mater benigna est. Tabulam specto. Augustinus Paulum vocat. Periculum timemus. Incolae insulas monstrant. Violas amo. Feminae cenas parant. Agricola equos incitat. Servi aedificia servant.

Taurus et musca

In cornu tauri sedet parva musca. "Si tibi gravis sum", inquit, "statim avolo". Taurus respondet: "Ubi es? Nihil sentio".

Homines: Vocabulary⁵

homō inis m	human being, man, person
agricola ae m	farmer, cultivator
labōrō 1 ⁶	to work, to labour
terra ae f	earth; land, soil
arō 1	to plough, to till
puella ae f	girl, maiden
magistra ae f	mistress, (lady) teacher, instructress
salūtō 1	to greet, to salute
amīca ae f	female friend
intrō 1	to go into, to enter
māter tris f	mother, matron
benīgnus 3 ⁷	kind-hearted, mild
est	is
tabula ae f	board, writing tablet
spectō 1	to look at, to watch, to observe
Augustīnus ī m	Augustine (name)
Paulus ī m	Paul
vocō 1	to call (upon), to invite
perīculum ī n	danger, trial
timeō 2	to fear, to be afraid (of)
incola ae m	inhabitant, resident
īnsula ae f	island; block of houses
mōnstrō 1	to show, to point out

5 In Latin, like in Ancient Greek, quantity (i.e. if a vowel or a consonant is short or long) is phonemic: it may distinguish in meaning between word forms which are, otherwise, identical. Since the indication is not orthographic, students normally find it in grammars and dictionaries only like "ō" and "ā" for example. As a standard, in this course, rendering without macron like "o" or "a" will indicate a short vowel. In a more precise rendering this would be "ö" and "ǎ". Macron and breve together like "ĩ" indicate that the vowel in question can be both long and short. Careful learning of quantity is important both in grammar (morphology) and in understanding poetry.

In the vocabulary, at each entry, as far as needed, the necessary morphological information has been given. More about this later.

6 In the sequence of lemmas the convention of each language is followed. In the Latin lexical entry for verbs the 1st person singular is given in the indicative of the active voice together with the number that indicates the infinitive and the conjugational type. In English, it is customary to distinguish the verbs from nouns adding *to*. In this sense, it is "laborare" that corresponds literally to English "to work".

7 The number after adjectives indicates the endings: so "3" means three endings according to the three genders: benīgnus, benigna, benignum.

viola ae f

amō 1

fēmina ae f

cēna ae f

parō 1

equus ī m

incitō 1

servus ī m

aedificium ī n

servō 1

violet (the name given to several
spring flowers, such as *sweet
violet* [*Viola odorata*] e.g.)

to love, to like

female, woman

dinner, supper

to prepare, to get ready

horse

to incite, to stir up; to set in rapid
motion

slave, servant

building

to keep, to look after

Taurus et musca: Vocabulary

taurus ī m	bull
et	and
musca ae f	fly
in cornū	on (its) horn
in + abl.	on; in
cornū ūs n	horn
sedeō 2	to sit, to remain
parvus 3	little, small
sī	if
tibi	(dative of tū) you, to/for you (sg.)
gravis e ⁸	heavy, weighty
sum	I am
inquit	he/she/it says
statim	at once, immediately
āvolō 1	to fly away
respondeō 2	to reply, to say in answer
ubi ⁹	where?
es	you are/are you (sg.)
nihil	nothing; not at all
sentiō 4	to feel, to perceive

8 This adjective has two endings: "gravis" (masculine and feminine), "grave" (neuter). Such forms are frequent also in French (e.g. animal, -e 'animal', 'zoic'; conséquent, -e '[self-]consistent', 'consequent') and in Italian.

9. Such an indication like in " ĭ " means that the vowel can be both short (the " ĭ " symbol) and long (the " ī " symbol). Otherwise the normal case is that a vowel is either long or short (e.g. ǒ ≠ ō).

A Bridge to Italian – Pons versus linguam Italicam nostrorum temporum

(Latin – Italian)¹⁰

Homines

homō inis m	uomo (uomini)
agricola ae m	agricoltore; agricolo
labōrō 1	lavorare ¹¹
terra ae f	terra
arō 1	arare
magistra ae f	magistero, magistrale
salūtō 1	salutare
amīca ae f	amica
intrō 1	entrare
māter tris f	madre
benīgnus 3	benigno
est	è
tabula ae f	tavola, tabella
spectō 1	specchiarsi, specchio
vocō 1	revocare
perīculum ī n	pericolo
timeō 2	temere
incola ae m	inquilino
īnsula ae f	isola, insulare
mōnstrō 1	mostrare
viola ae f	viola
amō 1	amare
fēmīna ae f	femmina
cēna ae f	cena
parō 1	parare
equus ī m	eculeo (=cavalletto)

10 This listing is not a vocabulary. It is an aid which shows the close relationship between Latin and Italian through word forms whichever. If a Latin word has no Italian relative it is not comprised in the list.

11 In the sequence of lemmas the convention of each language is followed. In the Latin lexical entry for verbs the 1st person singular is given in the indicative of the active voice together with the number that indicates the infinitive and the conjugational type. In Italian the infinitive is indicated in the same sense.

incitō 1
servus ī m
aedificium ī n
servō 1

incitare
servo
edificio
osservare

Taurus et musca

taurus ī m
et
musca ae f
cornū ūs n
in + abl.
sedeō 2
parvus 3
sī
gravis e
sum
āvolō 1
respondeō 2
ubī
es
nihil
sentiō 4

toro, taurino
e
mosca
corno
in
sedere
parvolo, parvità
se
grave
sono
volare
rispondere, responso
ubicare, ubicazione
sei (verb)
ni(c)hilismo, ni(c)hilista
sentire

Grammar

Basics:

Declension and conjugation

Nouns

Traditionally, five cases are assumed for Latin, to which a sixth, the vocative may be added. The cases are listed usually in the following order:

Nominativus¹² (N, Nom., Nominative)
Accusativus (A, Acc., Accusative)
Genitivus or Genetivus (G, Gen., Genitive)
Dativus (D, Dat., Dative)
Ablativus (Abl., Ablative)
Vocativus (V, Voc., Vocative).

The vocative frequently coincides with the nominative, but in some basic instances like with "amicus", "Paulus", the vocative is amice and Paule. This is comparable with the respective use in Greek.

Grammatical genders, like in Greek, are three: masculine, feminine and neuter ("neuter" means literally 'none of the two'):

m (=masculini generis or masculinum, *masculine*)
f (=feminini generis or femininum, *feminine*)
n (=neutrius generis or neutrum, *neuter*)

¹² The endings are masculine because "nominativus" and the other terms originally were adjectives: "casus nominativus" ('nominative case') etc.

Examples of declension:

1st declension, stem ending in -a. The gender is usually feminine, and rarely masculine:

Sg.	N	terra	Pl.	terrae
	A	terram		terrās
	G	terrae		terrārum
	D	terrae		terrīs
	Abl.	terrā ¹³		terrīs
	Voc.	terra		terrae

2nd declension, stem ending in -o. The ending of the nouns is -us, the gender is usually masculine, and rarely, feminine:

Sg.	N	equus	Pl.	equī
	A	equum		equōs
	G	equī		equōrum
	D	equō		equīs
	Abl.	equō		equīs
	Voc.	eque		equī

2nd declension, stem ending in -o. The ending of the nouns is -um, the gender is neuter:

Sg.	N	aedificium	aedificia
	A	aedificium	aedificia
	G	aedificiī	aedificiōrum
	D	aedificiō	aedificiīs
	Abl.	aedificiō	aedificiīs

¹³ The "a" of the ablative is long. The same principle is valid for the "o" in the ablative of the second declension. "Ae" in plural is also counted long. For convenience, several other instances of long vowels, although not orthographic, are also shown here.

3rd declension, stem ending in a consonant, the endings of the nouns vary. For example, the stem of "homo" ends in -n):

Sg.	N	homō	Pl.	hominēs
	A	hominem		hominēs
	G	hominis		hominum
	D	hominī		hominibus
	Abl.	homine		hominibus

3rd declension, stem ending in -ter, gender is feminine and masculine:

Sg.	N	māter	Pl.	mātrēs
	A	mātrem		mātrēs
	G	mātris		mātrum
	D	mātrī		mātribus
	Abl.	mātre		mātribus

Verbs

Verbs have four declensional paradigms called *conjugations*. The grouping principle reckoning with four types of stems, resembles that of the nouns. To the stems, the common ending *-re* is added yielding this system: 1 = *-āre*, 2 = *-ēre*, 3 = *-ĕre*, 4 = *-īre*.¹⁴ The infinitives are applied similarly to their use in English (the infinitive constructions comprised) and to Greek. The examples below belong to the indicative mood of the present tense in the active voice:

1st conjugation, stem in *-ā*, e.g. *laborō* 1 (=laborāre)

Sg.	<i>laborō</i>	Pl.	<i>laborāmus</i>
	<i>laborās</i>		<i>laborātis</i>
	<i>laborat</i>		<i>laborant</i>

2nd conjugation, stem in *-ē*, e.g. *respondeō* 2 (=respondēre)

Sg.	<i>respondeō</i>	Pl.	<i>respondēmus</i>
	<i>respondēs</i>		<i>respondētis</i>
	<i>respondet</i>		<i>respondent</i>

4th conjugation, stem in *-ī*, e.g. *sentiō* 4 (=sentīre)

Sg.	<i>sentiō</i>	Pl.	<i>sentīmus</i>
	<i>sentīs</i>		<i>sentītis</i>
	<i>sentit</i>		<i>sentiant</i>

Conjugation of *sum*, *esse* ('to be, Anc. Gk. εἶναι')

Sg.	<i>sum</i>	Pl.	<i>sumus</i>	(εἶμί	ἐσμέν)
	<i>es</i>		<i>estis</i>	(εἶ	ἐστέ)
	<i>est</i>		<i>sunt</i>	(ἐστ[ι]ν)	εἰσ[ι]ν)

¹⁴ With the exception of the 3rd declension, the stem vowel before the ending *-re* is long.

Syntax:

The usual place of the verb in a Latin sentence is final. It is said that the word order is SOV (subject – object – verb) in Latin.

SOV is also frequent in various languages of India. Hindi has, e.g., an SOV order.

Latin, unlike Greek, and like Russian, has no article, either indefinite or definite. This means that, e.g., "agricola" in the first sentence of our text can be translated in three ways:

1, 'farmer', 2, 'a farmer', 3, 'the farmer'. Every time the distinction appears important, one has to decide in favour of one of the interpretations based on the context.

Loquamur Latine! – Let's talk in Latin!

I.

salve!	hail! hi!, welcome!, good-bye!
domine	sir
domina	madam
dominula	miss
bonum diem	good day (good morning, good afternoon)!
bonum vesperum	good evening!
bonam noctem	good night!
Salve! Ut vales? – Optime/Bene/Satis bene/Non ita bene/Pessime	Hi. How are you? – I am fine/ tolerably well/not very well/I am not well
Salve Paule/Petre!	Hi, Paul/Peter.
Salva sis, Tullia, ut vales? – Bene valeo, gratias ago.	Hi, Tullia, how are you? – I am well, thanks.
Ita, ut dicis.	As you say/you are right.
Esto!	(Yes,) perhaps.
Recte iudicas.	That's correct. You are right.
Quo vadis? – Vado in hostem.	Where are you going? – I am going to face the enemy.

Violet:





Viola

(retrieved online on 20.8.2016 as "Unknown")¹⁵

In mythology (from the Wikipedia–article “Viola odorata”¹⁶):

“The violet flower was a favorite in ancient Greece and became the symbol of [Athens](#). Scent suggested sex, so the violet was an emblematic flower of [Aphrodite](#) and also of her son [Priapus](#), the deity of gardens and generation.

[Iamus](#) (Ἰάμος) was a son of [Apollo](#) and the nymph [Evadne](#). He was abandoned by his mother at birth. She left him lying in the Arkadian wilds on a bed of violets (ἴα) where he was fed honey by serpents. Eventually, he was discovered by passing shepherds who named him Iamus after the violet (*ion*¹⁷) bed.

The goddess [Persephone](#) and her companion Nymphs were gathering rose, crocus, violet, iris, lily and larkspur blooms in a springtime meadow when she was abducted by the god [Hades](#).”

¹⁵ *Viola* is the name given to several spring flowers, usually fragrant. The two flowers above are probably the *viola purpurea* (the sweet violet or with their scientific name *Viola odorata*).

¹⁶. Last edited 14 April, 2020, and with addenda by this writer.

¹⁷. ἴον ‘violet’, goes back to *Fἴon (*ϋἴon) – hence the linguistic kinship with *viola*.