

Spanish and Italian through Latin (with Teacher's Notes)

by Rose Williams

This modest little unit is intended to whet the students' appetite for expanding their language horizons.

It is dedicated to the many long-ago language professors at Baylor and UNC at Chapel Hill who in the 1950's and 1960's helped me identify and organize these linguistic trends.

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Section I

1. Spanish shifts from Latin



The Spanish city of Segovia seen through the Roman Aqueduct

Spanish, of all the Romance languages, is in some ways closest to Latin. As the Romans took provinces in Spain, spoken Latin supplanted the native Iberian language. The Spanish condensed Latin forms and adjusted them to their own speech patterns. Although the Moorish period added to the Spanish language, it has never undergone the great shifts experienced by French, for example. The following guidelines will help the student of Latin read simple Spanish.

1. Nouns have one form, usually made from the Latin ablative singular. (libro from liber; monte from mons). Genders are masculine and feminine.(malo, mala). The plural is generally formed by adding s or es. Nouns are commonly preceded by an article made from parts of ille, illa, illud. (el libro malo, la luna mala).

2. Verbs have three regular conjugations. Present tense verbs drop all t's. Two verbs for "go", *ir* and *vadere*, combine. (one of two "be" verbs)

amar		ir		ser-to be	
amo	amamos	voy-I go	vamos-we go	soy-I am	somos-we are
amas	amais	vas-you go	vais- you go	eres-you are	sois-you are
ama	aman	va-he, she, it goes	van-they go	es-he, she it is	son-they are

3. Endings, being unstressed, are often lost. Thus the accent in Spanish may move to the last syllable, which was the penult in Latin. (*facil, amar*)

4. Double letters become single. (*dificil, comun, aceptar*)

5. Internal e often becomes ie; o may become ue. (*tierra, bien, tienes; bueno, muerte*)

6. c and q often become g; t may become d. (*amigo, agua; madre, libertad, todo*)

7. li becomes j; ct becomes ch. (*mujer, ajeno; noche, dicho, ocho*)

8. d is often lost between vowels; initial g or f may become silent h (*caer; juicio; hijo, hermano*)

9. e is added before sc, sp or st; cl and fl become ll. (*escuela, estar, especie, llamar, lluvia*)

10. Internal x becomes j; final x becomes z. (*ejemplo, ejercito; paz, luz*)

11. au becomes o (*oro, toro, oir* — also uses rules 3 and 8)

Remember that two or more of the above rules may be at work in the same word. hijo, for example, involves rules 1, 7, and 8 in its evolution from filius.

Here is a simple story in Spanish. See if you can read it. (Stories such as this show the Spanish habit of mocking the rich or the powerful)

Section I

2. *El Hombre Rico*

En Espana vive un hombre rico, Sancho Garcia. No es inteligente. Su hijo, Pablo, tambien (1) es muy (2) ignorante. No va a la escuela.

Una dia Sancho dice a Pablo:

"Manana tu tienes que(3) ir a la escuela porque(4) la gente rica debe tener una buena educacion. Aqui(5) tiene dos libros grandes, y(6) una pluma(7) de oro." Pablo va a la escuela cada(8) dia. Al fin de tres meses(9) el hombre rico va a la escuela para decir con el profesor. El profesor dice que Pablo no aprende nada.

"Pero, señor profesor, mi hijo tiene dos libro grandes y una pluma de oro. Que mas(10) necisita para aprender(11)?"

"Ah, señor, su hijo no tiene la capacidad."

"Bueno; soy un hombre rico," dice Sancho. "Manana compro(12) una buena capacidad para mi hijo."

1. Tambien is made from two Latin words—tam and bene
2. muy, like soy, has substituted y for its original ending; it is from multus
3. Spanish uses a word for “for” before an infinitive; do not translate que
4. As with the French pourquoi, this word is made from pro and quid; it can mean both why and because.
5. In English-here
6. This is the word for et
7. Writing pens (quills) were once made from feathers.
8. In English-every
9. From mensis
- 10 From magis
11. From apprehendo; meaning is closer to comprehendo
12. From comparo; specialized meaning of “purchase”

Section I

3. In Sevilla

This second story is more complicated, as it involves past tenses and poder(possum)

Un turista americano(1) visitaba(2) Sevilla acompañado(3) de un guía(4) de Sevilla. El sevillano(5) condujo(6) al americano al un monumento del tiempo de los arabes que se llama(7) la Torre del Oro.

“Que bonita!” dijo(8) el turista. “Cuanto tiempo tardaron(9) en hacer(10) esto(11)?

El guía, extranado(12) de esta pregunta(13), dijo: “Creo(14) que los arabes tardaron unos cien(15) años(16) en hacerla.”

“Caramba! Cuanto tiempo! En los Estados Unidos podemos(17) hacer esto en seis meses.”

No le gusto al sevillano esta repuesta, pero condujo al americano en turistico itinerario a los monumentos mas importantes de Sevilla. El turista americano hacia(18) las mismas(19) exclamaciones y la misma impertinente pregunta para cada nuevo monumento:

“Cuanto tiempo tardaron en hacer esto?” El sevillano redujo el numero de años en que se hicieron los monumentos de Sevilla; siempre el turista contestaba al final, “En los Estados Unidos podemos hacer esto in dos meses...”

El guía condujo al turista por las vias de Sevilla al pie de la Giralda(Torre arabe de la cathedral de Sevilla).

“Esta torre si que es bella! Que elegante! Cuanto tiempo tardaron en hacerla?”

“Mire usted, señor. No puedo decirlo, porque anoche fui aqui y esto era un sitio de edificio(20).”

1. Notice that proper adjectives such as “American” are not capitalized in Spanish.
2. The imperfect tense—in Latin “visitabat”
3. The perfect participle—in Latin “acompañatus”
4. Guide
5. The proper noun for an inhabitant of Seville
6. The perfect tense—apply rules 3 and 10
7. se llama-from “clamat se” translate “is called”
8. see number 6
9. If “sunt” became “son”, what was “tardaron” in Latin? Translate “did they take(use)”

10. An infinitive—apply rules 3 and 8
11. From “iste”
12. Past participle-“greatly surprised”
13. “question”
14. Apply rule 8
15. Apply rules 3 & 5
16. Apply rule 4
- 17 In Latin “possumus
18. Perfect tense
- 19 “the same”
20. Translate the last three words as “vacant lot.”

Section I

Teachers' Notes

This can be a valuable study, but students should understand at the outset that this is no substitute for a conventional Spanish course. Students often ask if the shifts listed below always occur. They do not, so this is not preparation for writing Spanish, but only for reading it. If the shift has not occurred, the word still looks like its Latin counterpart.

Unless the teacher or one of the students is well acquainted with Spanish, the pronunciation can be difficult, as “h” is silent, initial “j” is pronounced “h”, etc. A session with a good language tape can take care of this, however.

This story is presented in the present tense, and students should be able to work it out.

Translation:

THE RICH MAN

In Spain lives a rich man, Sancho Garcia. He is not intelligent. His son, Pablo, is very ignorant as well. He does not go to school.

One day Sancho says to Pablo:

Tomorrow you have to go to school, for a rich family ought to have one good education.

Here you have(imperative form) two large books, and a pen of gold.” Pablo goes to school every day. At the end of three months the rich man goes to the school to talk with the professor. The professor says that Pablo does not understand anything(literally nothing).

“But, Mister Professor, my son has two large books and a pen of gold. What more is necessary to learn?”

“Ah, Sir, your son does not have the capacity.”

“Good; I am a rich man,” says Pablo. “Tomorrow I (shall) buy one good capacity for my son.”

IN SEVILLE

An American tourist was visiting Seville accompanied by a guide of Seville. The Sevillano led the American to a monument of the Arabs’ time called the Tower of Gold.

“How beautiful!” said the tourist. “How much time did they take to make(build) this?”

The guide, surprised by the question, said:

“I believe that the Arabs spent one hundred years in making (to make) this.”

“Caramba! What a time! In the United States we could make this in six months.”

The Sevillano did not like this reply, but he led the American on a tourist itinerary of the more important monuments of Seville. The American tourist made the same exclamation and the same impertinent question for every new monument: "How much time did they use in building this." The Sevillano recited the number of years in which they built the monuments of Seville; always the tourist answered at the end "In the United States we are able to make that in two months..."

The guide led the tourist through the streets of Sevilla to the foot of the Giralda (the Arabic tower of the cathedral of Seville).

"This tower is very beautiful! How elegant! How long did they take to build this?"

"You may wonder, sir. I am not able to say, for last night I was here and it was a vacant lot!"

Section II

1. *Italian Shifts from Latin*



Temple of Vesta above Villa Georgina, Tivoli

The Italian invaders from the North adjusted the Latin language to their speech patterns, and often changed the spelling of a Latin word to preserve its sound.

1. Nouns have one form, usually made from the Latin ablative singular. There are two genders, masculine and feminine. The masculine ordinary masculine plural is like the Latin nominative plural. (libro- a book; libri-two books). The feminine plural is like the Latin nominative plural, but it follows the diphthong habit of dropping one letter. (luna-one moon; lune-two moons). Third declension nouns often retain their base forms and then take a second declension ending (corpo, corpi). Some retain the singular form. (morte, morte)

2. Verbs have three conjugations. (vocare, tenere, dormire) Many are irregular.

vocare-to call		essere-to be		andare-to go	
voco-I call	vociamo-we call	sono-I am	siamo	vado	andiamo
voci-you call	vocate-you call	sei- you are	siete	vai	andate
voca-he, she, it calls	vocano-they call	e- he, she, it is	sono	va	vanno

3. Final consonants except n and r drop. (sic-si; vocat-voca)
4. First syllable may drop; internal syllables may drop. (historia-storia; civitate-citta)
5. E may change to ie; o to uo; u to o.(pede-piede; bono-buono; multo-molto)
6. B and p may change to v. (amabat-amava; bibere-bevere)
7. Ct, pt and lt change to tt.(septem-sette; optimo-ottimo)
8. Internal g and j shift to gg. (lege-legge; majore-maggiore)
9. Pl, cl, fl change to pi, ci, fi. (flumen-fiume; placere-piacere; clamare-chiamare: for pronunciation of last two Italian words see rule 13)
10. X, ex, and dis may become s. (exemplo-esempio; dixit-disse)
11. Au loses one letter or changes to o.(tauro-toro; audire-udire)
12. Internal ti becomes z.(gratia-grazie; Florentia-Firenze; credentia-credenza)
13. H is added to preserve the hard “k” sound; otherwise it disappears. g behaves like a Spanish tilde –it produces a “y” sound, but is not itself pronounced. v changes to gu as a representative of the lost “w” sound. (clamo-chiamo: pronounced KEY A MO, whereas citta is pronounced CHEE TA ; homo-uomo; filio-figlio; visa-guisa)
14. Qu becomes ch. (quem, quid, etc.-che)
15. Articles are formed from parts of ille, illa, illud

masculine il or lo; plural i or gli

feminine la plural le

These fuse with prepositions

della, del—of, with the

colla, col—with the

nella, nel—in the

dalla, dal—from the

sulla, sul—on the

Indirect objects fuse with verbs

Damelo —give me that

Section II

2. *Geografia dell'Italia*

In L'Italia ci(1) sono molte grandi citta. Roma, capitale della nazione, e situata sul Tevere; Pisa e(2) Firenze si trovano(3) sull'Arno. Il Po e l'Adige sono altri fiumi ben conosciuti. Torino e Milano sono due grandi centri industriali del nord, cioe(4) nell'Italia settentrionale. Anche(5) le belle citta di Genova, Bologna, e Venezia, visitate da molti turisti, si trovano nel nord. L'Italia meridionale, cioe la parte nel sud del paese(6), e soprattutto(7) agraria e ricca di storia classica. Napoli, s'intende(8), e la metropoli del “mezzogiorno(9).” Tutti conoscono le Alpi e gli Appennini, catene di monti imponenti.

L'Italia ha anche i soli vulcani attivi del continente: il Vesuvio, proprio vicino a Napoli e Pompei; e l'Etna, in Sicilia. Fra(10) le isole piu famose lungo la costa, ci sono la Sardegna, l'Elba, Capri e Ishcia. La Corsica, luogo di nascita di Napoleone Buonaparte, e oggidi(11) francese.

Qualche domanda geografica (Riposte in italiano, per piacere)

Dov e la celebre torre pendente?

Come si chiamano le due metropoli industriali del nord?

Quale fiume attraversa Firenze e Pisa?

Quale e la citta dei canali?
E industriale e commerciale l'Italia meridionale?
Dov e la Scala?
Come(12) si chiamano due mari limitrofi dell'Italia?
Dove si fabbricano molte machine italiane?
Dove si trovano i famosi vulcani il Vesuvio e l'Etna?
Quale porto si associa alla storia di Cristoforo Colombo?
In quale citta ci sono molti musei d'arte?

1. There
2. E without an accent =et; with an accent, est
3. Si trovano is a reflexive phrase-translate as lie
4. That is
5. Also
6. Country
7. A combination of super and totus
8. Of course
9. A combination of medius and diurnus
10. Among
11. From hodie
12. From Quo Modo

Section II

3. La Storia dell' Italia

La storia dell' Italia e in gran parte la storia di Roma. Secondo la leggenda Roma fu fondata da Romolo e Remo, due fanciulli(1) che, abbandonati, vennero(2) allattati(3) da una lupa. Roma divenne(4) forte e, assorbite le citta vicine, comincio quell'espansione che mill'anni dopo(5) comprendeva tutto il mondo allora(6) conosciuto. Nel secolo(7) IV, l'Impero Romano comincio a decadere e dopo circa un secolo il grande impero d'occidente soccombeva alla invasioni dei barbari. Anche oggidi nel campo delle leggi, dell'arte, della politica, della scienza militare, della letteratura, dell'architettura, si sente l'influsso delle gloriosa civiltà dei Romani antichi.

Section II

4. Proverbi Italiani

Errori de medico, volonta di Dio.
Chi da per ricevere, non da nulla(8)
Lingua toscano(9) in bocca(10) romana.
Meglio tardi che mai(11)
In bocca chiusa non entran mosche(12)
Dagli amici mi guardi Iddio(13); che dei nemici(14) mi guardo io(15).

1. boys
2. from venerunt; translate came to be
3. nursed
4. from divenire; translate became

5. after, afterwards
6. then
7. from seculum
8. Note that in Italian, as in Spanish, there is a preposition before the infinitive and there is a double negative.
9. Tuscan, Florentine
10. mouth
11. never
12. flies
13. from Deus
14. from inimicus
15. I

Section II

Teachers' Notes

Italian is in some ways farther from Latin than is Spanish, and for that reason Spanish is presented first. Some unique qualities of Italian, such as the various grammatical ways of doing the same thing, may frustrate careful students. Examples are the various ways of forming the feminine plural. In a word with an ultimate accent, such as *citta*, the plural may remain the same as the singular. In third declension adjectives such as *grande*, the feminine plural may be the same as the masculine: *grandi*. The preposition *in* may fuse with an article to form *nel* or *nella*, or it may stand in front of the article: *in la*. There are general directions for the occasions when this occurs, but they are not uniformly applied.

Translation:

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ITALY

In Italy there are many grand cities. Rome, the capital of the nation, is situated on the Tiber; Pisa and Florence lie on the Arno. The Po and the Adige are other well-known rivers. Turin and Milan are two grand industrial centers of the north, that is of Italy of the seven plowmen (an old astronomical way of locating the north). Also the beautiful cities of Genoa, Bologna, and Venice, visited by many tourists, lie in the north. Italy of the noonday, that is the part in the south of the country, is above all agricultural and rich in classical history. Naples, of course, is the city of the "noonday" (south). All people know the Alps and the Appennines, chains of important mountains. Italy has also the only active volcanoes on the continent: Vesuvius, in the close vicinity of Naples and Pompeii, and Etna in Sicily. Among the most famous islands along the coast there are Sardinia, Elba, Capri, and Ischia. Corsica, the place of the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte, is today French.

Some geography questions (Answer in Italian, please)

- Where is the celebrated leaning tower? (Nella Pisa)
- What (how) do they call the two industrial cities of the north? (Milano e Torino)
- What river crosses Florence and Pisa? (Arno)
- What is the city of the canals? (Venezia)
- Is the south of Italy industrial or commercial? (non; e agraria)
- Where is La Scala? (Nel Milano; e la casa del opera)
- What do they call the two seas bordering Italia? (l'Adriatico e il Tyrreno)

Where are many Italian machines made? (nel Milano e Torino)

Where lie the famous volcanoes Vesuvius and Etna? (nel vicino a Napoli; nella Sicilia)

What port is associated with the history of Christopher Columbus?

In what cities are there many museums of art? (nella Roma, Firenze, Venezia, Napoli)

THE HISTORY OF ITALY

The history of Italy is in great part the history of Rome. According to the legend Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, two boys who, abandoned, came to be nursed by a she-wolf. Rome became powerful and, the neighboring cities having been absorbed, began that expansion which a thousand years afterward included the whole world then known.

In the fourth century the Roman Empire began to decay, and after about one hundred years the grand empire of the west succumbed to the invasion of the barbarians. Even today in the fields of law, of art, of politics, of military science, of literature, of architecture is felt the influence of the glorious civilization of ancient Rome.

ITALIAN PROVERBS

The errors of the doctor (are) the will of God.

He who gives to receive gives nothing.

A Florentine tongue in a Roman mouth. (A reference to the smoothness of the Florentine)

Better tardy than absent.

Into a closed mouth no flies enter.

From my friends may God guard me; I can handle my enemies.