



2016

# Teacher Attitudes toward Latin Instruction at the Elementary Level

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**Teacher Attitudes toward Latin Instruction at the Elementary Level**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Honors in the  
College of Education

By

Kirsten Brodmann

Under the mentorship of  
Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson and Dr. Yasar Bodur

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify whether teacher attitudes toward Latin instruction at the elementary level were generally positive or negative. Participants were elementary Latin and English Language Art teachers who had experience with students receiving Latin instruction in elementary classrooms. Data were collected through interviews. The elementary teachers were questioned about their general experience of Latin and their observations of Latin's effects on other content areas. Differences in opinions between Latin instructors and English Language Arts instructors were recorded. This study benefits educators who are interested in teaching Latin as a content area or integrating Latin into a subject in an elementary level classroom.

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April 2016  
College of Education  
University Honors Program  
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### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my thesis mentors and professors in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. Their willingness and availability toward me was appreciated and very helpful.

To Dr. Williams-Johnson, thank you for your willingness to help me with my chosen topic. I really appreciate your guidance as I chose a topic, researched, and wrote my literature review. I also am so grateful for your help to receive my Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. In retrospect, I am so glad that you encouraged and subtly pushed me to speak at different research conferences. I was wary of public speaking, but they were some of the most rewarding experiences that were made available to me through the University Honors Program.

To Dr. Yasar Bodur, thank you for your assistance and patience as I completed my methods, data collection, and analysis. I would like to express my gratitude toward you for your understanding and extra time spent with me in your office. I appreciate how flexible you were to meet with me around my crazy student teaching schedule to finalize and complete my paper.

To Mr. Scott Taylor, thank you for your willingness to let me interview your staff for my research. Without your cooperation and the support of Veritas Academy's staff, I would not have been able to collect any data.

Finally, to the University Honors Program at Georgia Southern, thank you for this opportunity and encouragement to research at the undergraduate level. I appreciate the many opportunities presented to me, including speaking at the 2015 Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative and the 2016 Honors Research Symposium.

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### **Teacher Attitudes toward Latin Instruction at the Elementary Level**

From the Middle Ages, through the Enlightenment, and on to the discovery and expansion of the New World, education has had certain aspects that have remained unchanged. Education was not formed to create a readiness for a career pathway, but rather it was to offer a study of a broad range of topics for a well informed and critical thinking body of individuals (Curtius, 1990). Furthermore, in earlier generations not only was a second language learned but the study of Latin and Greek were required in most universities (Ong, 1959). Latin and Greek were studied for more critical level thinking and better understanding of the history, philosophy, and literature of the past that was written in its original language (VanTassel Baska, 2003). Latin was highly regarded in the United States as valuable to grasping the classics and comprehension of the Romance languages until the nineteen twenties (Haag, 2003). Serving as a common feature amongst most of the western countries, Latin was required for all higher levels. Before the Reformation, church services were in Latin, and, as more languages evolved, Latin was known as the mother of these languages.

The Roaring Twenties came and with it, the progressive movement. Progressivists worked to change the makeup of the United States, politically, socially, and even intellectually. Value diminished on the classic approach to education and emphasis was placed on present experiences. Students were assisted in their studies; however, they were encouraged to arrive at truth individually (Zilversmit, 1993). Students were taught that everyone could achieve success, both males and females. The women's suffrage movement was also underway. The great American zeal was in the air

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with rugged individualism. Americans became distracted and did not see the significant abandonment of Latin in education. What would the educational system look if classical models were advocated?

Many classicists working to create a revival and curiosity of the past and of dead languages attempt to address that very question. How much improved would the byproducts of our public schools be if our schools were shaped by the same philosophies of the past? Specifically, with the study of Latin, there are many arguable benefits to having it placed back into school curriculum. These classicists claim that a further understanding of the Latin-speaking historians, philosophers, and thinkers of the past, as well as a fuller grasp of the “mother of all languages” and consequentially all Romance languages, would add advantages to the classroom (Haag, 2003).

By studying Latin in elementary schools, students could more easily learn a third language, vocabulary, and language arts (Prager, 2000; Masciantonio, 1987; VanTassel Baska, 1987). Students in third and fourth grade could benefit from the study of Latin as they are developing writing and more critical skills. The English language can be traced directly back to Latin. As Masciantonio’s (1987) comprehensive study shows that sixty to eighty percent of English words are derived from Latin. He added that Latin would improve English grammar of the students. The students would receive a double-dose of instruction.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study of Latin might be the type of reform needed to improve the United States educational system. Mastery in Latin can assist students in any career involving a

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foreign, Romance language, writing, literature, philosophy, history, or medicine. This study explored teacher attitudes towards Latin in classrooms, roadblocks to integrating Latin in classrooms, and teacher observed benefits to Latin in classrooms.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Classical education is not a well-known form of education at this time. Many educators do not know the arguments for or against Latin in classrooms. Many may assume that the absence of Latin necessarily proves that the education system is better off without it. This topic was chosen to bring more awareness to the ongoing debates that Latin should or should not be integrated into classrooms. Specifically many debates are held for Latin to be introduced to improve SAT scores and cognitive abilities in secondary education, but very few center around elementary school (Haag and Stern, 2003). For this reason, the focus this research on was devoted to understanding the teacher attitudes of Latin in elementary grades specifically.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are teacher attitudes toward Latin curriculum in elementary level classrooms?
2. How do teachers think Latin content can help students achieve in learning grammar and any second language?
3. What are the differences in attitudes toward Latin in elementary level classrooms between English Language Arts teachers and Latin teachers?

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### **Literature Review**

The majority of sources found through the search engine, Galileo, yielded many studies conducted to explore the benefits and disadvantages of integrating Latin into classrooms and attempting to mirror a more classical form of education. Specifically, *The Classical Journal*, proved to be quite helpful in recent studies exploring similar issues related to this endeavor.

Many studies have been performed in the last fifty years justifying the need for Latin in elementary grade classrooms. Many benefits have surfaced and been claimed through these studies. The spectrum reaches from benefits in moral values, motivation in other studies, cognitive abilities in other studies, to philology, vocabulary, and grammar skills (Holliday, 2012; Masciantonio, 1977 Thorndike, 1924; VanTassel Baska, 1987). Many of these benefits can be studied scientifically through comparison of test scores between a test group and a group studying Latin quantitatively. Some benefits can be studied through interviews and surveys qualitatively. A few claimed benefits, however, are claimed through correlation.

### **Benefits for the English Language**

The most common benefit claimed from the study of Latin is developed success of the English language. Offenber (1971) conducted a study in eighty-five different Philadelphia schools observing fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in which a control group was compared to a collection of students receiving Latin instruction daily. Their vocabulary skills were measured using the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*. Furthermore, a

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survey was conducted involving eighty-five participants including students, their parents, teachers, and school administration. The results of the survey indicated a majority rule of positive opinions of Latin in the classroom and the resulting effects. When school principals and teachers were asked if the Latin program had been successful thus far, ninety-two percent of principals and ninety-eight percent of teachers answered yes. Furthermore, they were also asked if they believed if the Latin program expanded student vocabulary skills. Eighty-six percent of principals and ninety-five percent of teachers affirmed this statement. The test scores also showed that the Latin students' percentile ranks not only above mastery in English vocabulary, but one full year ahead than the control group.

In a similar study, Sheridan (1976) compared sixth grade students in six different schools all studying Latin daily with an appropriate control group. Initial analyses were done after one year of the program, and then again after three years. Students' scores of the *Intermediate Metropolitan Achievement Test* were compared to provide data. After one year, the Latin students exceeded the control group by eight months on Word Knowledge, one year and one month in Language Arts, and one year in Reading. After three years, the success of Latin students was very similar. A survey accompanied this study prompting teachers to comment on student behavior changes as they studied Latin. One teacher remarked, "What an exciting way by which to teach children vocabulary! I am sure for most of my students that the vocabulary words learned through Latin will be remembered longer than most others." Another stated, "Latin has made my students more word conscious." The majority of the comments were very positive towards Latin instruction and were usually directed to English language improvement.

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Masciantonio (1974) researched the effect the study of Latin has on English reading skills. The experiment was conducted in Easthampton, Massachusetts with the fifth and sixth graders in the public school system. They were given Latin instruction daily. Compared to previous sixth graders' who did not learn Latin, performance on *The Stanford Achievement Test*, eleven percent more of the Latin students scored above grade level and twenty-four percent more scored beyond two years above grade level.

Although these numbers are not overwhelmingly supporting Latin in the classroom, Masciantonio (1974) still judged this experiment to be in favor of the integration of Latin in schools. The results were clear enough and not inconclusive. Due to the narrow gap of success, their results increased mistrust on the experiment's credibility.

The District of Columbia (1971) engineered their own research using sixth graders in eleven of their public schools. Students took the *Terra Nova Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*. Grouped by foreign language instruction, Latin students, Spanish students, French students, and students with no foreign language exposure were compared in vocabulary, comprehension, and overall reading skills. Moreover, Latin classes, Spanish classes, and French classes were compared as units to verify the validity of the results. The outcome proved to be quite interesting as the students studying a foreign language were five months ahead in reading abilities in their native language than those with no foreign language experience. It did not matter how long the students had studied their chosen language; the results were the same. The French and Spanish students had been in classes for four years, and Latin students only one year. These results prompt a few questions. No matter the foreign language, students still improved in reading ability, so why Latin? Furthermore, is it significant that Latin students

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performed just as well as the Spanish and French students with only one year of instruction? Does this indicate another benefit of Latin learning?

Payne (1973) funded by the Virginian city, Alexandria, tested fifth and sixth graders in the area. The experimental and control group were compared using the *Gates-MacGintie Vocabulary Test* and the *Slosson Oral Reading Test*. In addition, a survey was administered to teachers, consultants, administrators, and the State Department of Education staff. After one year of Latin instruction, no significant differences were seen between the experimental and control group, except in their oral reading skills. These results cannot be generalized because they tested a very small sample of fifty-seven in each group. No conclusions can be drawn.

Scanlan (1976) studied the benefits of Latin within the University of Illinois. A class curriculum was written with a computer-assisted format. Results indicated that when compared to a control group, students improved on a standardized vocabulary test. A few in the group improved by forty percentile ranks. A similar study in Georgia was conducted by Holmes (1995) on high school students and their performance on the *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*. After participating in a computer program learning Latin and Greek words commonly seen as English derivatives, there was no significant increase or difference between the experimental and control group. Still, Holmes states that the majority of the researchers believed in some positive effect no matter the magnitude in Latin instruction.

Many teachers, students, and parents are skeptical of integrating Latin into classrooms. Booth (1980) addresses some of the common objections. Some believe that, because Rome fell in 476 BC, Latin is dead, no one speaks it, and it is not useful to

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students today. Masciantonio (1987) disproves these accusations with his research indicating that more than sixty percent of the English language is derived from Latin. In truth, Booth explains, students, teachers, and parents all speak Latin daily. Additionally, many believe Latin to be a waste of time when monetary success is the goal; however, many occupations make use of the Latin language often. Specifically journalism, medicine, law, engineering, and the sciences according to Booth, are just a few of the many occupations that would monetarily benefit the workers if they knew Latin.

### **Benefits for Student Language Awareness, Critical Thinking Skills, and Cognitive Abilities**

Mavrogenes (1977) explains the encompassing benefits of Latin that it contributes to vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and grammar skills as a linguistic instinct. Philologically, by studying Latin, students have to step outside of their own language and learn the items of grammar more objectively. By learning to conjugate Latin verbs in present, past, imperfect, pluperfect, imperative, future, or future perfect tense, students learn the true definitions and uses of each tense. Fredericks (1974) summarizes L. S. Vygotsky's thoughts on language skills and quotes Vygotsky's (1934) book *Thought and Language* as saying,

“A foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his language as a particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations.”

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In short, students develop all skills associated with language arts, critical thinking, and second language learning.

Harrington-Lueker (1992) explores the study of Latin and benefit of critical thinking and cognitive abilities further. In Kansas City, MO, a study was conducted at a middle school that had been rated the lowest in academics in their district. The researchers believed that, by studying Latin, students would grow in reading, language arts, and especially in critical thinking skills and cognitive abilities consequently increasing their grades in other classes like math and science. This view is debatable.

Thorndike (1924) conducted a study on this cognitive ability transfer and concluded,

The chief reason why good thinkers seem superficially to have been made such by having taken certain school studies is that good thinkers have taken certain school studies, becoming better by the inherent tendency of the good to gain more than the poor from any study. When the good thinkers studied Greek and Latin, these studies seemed to make good thinking... After positive correlation of gain with initial ability is allowed for, the balance in favor of any study is certainly not large. Disciplinary values may be real and deserve weight in curriculum, but the weights should be reasonable.

All presumed benefits of studying Latin are concluded through correlation and therefore must be significantly scrutinized as Thorndike did.

### **Benefits for the Study of a Second Language**

Haag (2003) believes that, even amongst the criticism, he can prove a correlation between the study of Latin and the transfer effect of success in other foreign language

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studies. Latin is known as the mother of all Western languages, directly affecting the Romance languages and indirectly affecting the Indo-European languages such as English and German. According to Holliday (2012), Latin and English have a genetic relationship. Moreover, one Latin word can affect a hundred English words. Take the Latin verb, *audire*. *Audire* means to hear or to listen. *Audible*, *auditor*, *audition*, *auditorium*, *auditory*, *audio*, *audiocassettes*, *audio books*, and more are a few English words directly related to that one Latin word.

Haag (2008) conducted his experiment by creating a sample of 50 female University of Erlangen-Nuremberg students who started learning English in fifth grade with German as their native language. Beginning in the seventh grade, 25 participants had begun to learn Latin and 25 studied French. After participating in a fifteen week long study of Spanish, the French and Latin students' grades were compared. The results proved that the French students were exceedingly more prepared to learn a third language than the Latin students. Haag posits that modern romance languages may have tighter similarities than the archaic Latin language. Studying Latin for the benefit of a third language acquisition may be a detour rather than a shortcut.

Studying Latin in classrooms can be very beneficial. The findings in several studies on integrating Latin in classrooms agree that some positive outcome occurred from incorporating Latin into the curriculum. The disagreements lie on what the outcomes and to what extent do these outcomes come about. The research posed in this study addressed different teachers' opinions on Latin in classrooms, the benefits they have witnessed, and barriers of any kind preventing success in Latin integration.

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### **Methods**

#### **Participants**

The subjects of this study consisted of three elementary school Latin teachers and two elementary English Language Arts teachers from a South Eastern Georgia urban private school. The Latin teachers had at least one year of teaching experience and a college degree. The English Language Arts teachers had at least three years of teaching experience and a college degree. The teachers were selected on a volunteer basis. The set of three Latin teachers and set of English Language Arts teachers were placed into two groups for comparison.

The participants of this study were all originally exposed to Latin as a teacher in elementary school. None received training in their education. They were self-taught with mentors at hand. The three participating Latin teachers were placed in the third, fourth, and fifth grade level. The two English Language Arts teachers taught in a second and fifth grade classroom. Although the ELA teacher were not designated Latin instructors, both conveyed that they would review and practice Latin content with their students each week. For this reason, the ELA teachers were well informed about Latin in the classroom and how it may affect their students' performance.

#### **Design**

This study used a phenomenological qualitative research design, as Bogdan and Bilken defines it in his book, *Qualitative Research in Education* (1998). They explain that, "A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. The basic purpose of

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phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence... The inquirer then collects data from persons who have experiences the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals.” The research was executed by interviews of the two groups of teachers. The volunteers were notified by email to set a meeting time for an interview. The teachers were informed that they would be participating in a study of having the study of Latin at the elementary level, the students’ perceived benefits, and the roadblocks to teaching Latin at the elementary level. During their scheduled interview, they were encouraged to describe specific experiences in detail, as well as their overarching answers to the interview questions. The study ascertained a compilation of narratives of teacher experiences and opinions. The study showed the benefits and hardships of placing the study of Latin in the elementary level. The time frame of the study remained within the teachers’ second semester of the school year.

### **Instrumentation**

A set of open-ended interview questions were asked to the Latin teachers and a set were asked to the English Language Arts teachers, prompting them to relay their experiences (see Appendix A and B) emulating the interview design found in Creswell’s *Qualitative Inquiry Research Design* (2013). The questions as well as any needed extra prompts from the interviewer for more detail or clarification were used to ascertain the teachers’ opinions of Latin at the elementary level. The Latin teachers were asked to describe their opinions on the benefits for the students during their study of Latin as well as the long term benefits, the teachers’ attitudes towards the Latin subject in schools, and

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the roadblocks they have encountered as pertaining to teaching Latin in classrooms. The English Language Arts teachers were asked to describe their opinions on the benefits for the students during their study of Latin as well as the long term benefits and the teachers' attitudes towards the Latin subject in schools. The interview with the participants consisted of 13 questions.

### **Data Collection**

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed afterwards. The teachers were emailed to set a time for the face-to-face or phone interviews. Interviews were either held in their school classroom or over the phone.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcribed interviews were analyzed. As Creswell (2013) outlines, the researcher coded each transcript, highlighting any important quotes that provide answers to the research questions. Any emerging themes were examined and created into clusters of meanings. Teacher answers were grouped by positive or negative attitudes towards Latin in the classroom. Lastly, the researcher summarized the identified clusters of meanings into a textural description of the teachers' experiences according to their answers to the interview questions.

## **Results**

This study consisted of five willing participants, three elementary level Latin teachers and two elementary level English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. Each

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participant was interviewed and recorded, relating their own experience of Latin at the elementary level. The five teachers were agreed on many of the interview questions and had differing opinions concerning other questions. All of the teachers were specifically interested in discussing the characteristics of the Latin language, Latin instruction, the effect Latin has on other subjects, and the different attitudes towards Latin.

Teachers were generally very positive in their assessment towards Latin at the elementary level. They listed many benefits that they have observed stemming from Latin instruction. The teachers were all on staff at a private, classical school, requiring Latin. Still, their comments and thoughts towards Latin were not influenced by Latin being a burden or requirement. These teachers were enthusiastic about Latin instruction that they would more than likely become spokespersons for Latin instruction at the elementary level wherever they were employed.

The interview questions were geared to the following three questions:

1. What are teacher attitudes toward Latin curriculum in elementary level classrooms?
2. How do teachers think Latin content can help students achieve in learning grammar and any second language?
3. What are the differences in attitudes toward Latin in elementary level classrooms between English Language Arts teachers and Latin teachers?

The interviewer asked each interview question listed in the appendix, but she also asked probing, clarifying, and follow-up questions during the conversations. Each interview provides new insights and results because each teacher had differing opinions, unique experiences, and values certain characteristics of Latin instruction differently. Some

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teachers wanted to discuss scores and data in relation to Latin instruction. One teacher emphasized parent attitudes toward Latin content. Two others derived much of their own opinion of Latin on how much the students enjoyed the content. The three questions driving this study were answered and reviewed by the process of coding the transcribed interviews, identifying words and phrases that were said frequently.

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward Latin**

After the five interviews were analyzed, teachers' attitudes toward Latin instruction at the elementary level were determined. All of the participants verbalized that teaching Latin was a positive thing. Many of the frequently used words included fun, exciting, favorite, love, good, beneficial, easy, and confident. Teacher attitudes were derived from student enjoyment as well as helpfulness of the knowledge of Latin in other content areas. Student enjoyment stemmed from the uniqueness of Latin compared to the other subjects and the engaging instruction. One of the Latin teachers explained that students find Latin to be different than anything else they learn. She explained that Latin is "like learning a code, like a secret language that nobody else knows. It's like a mystery." Students find it engaging and see it as a game. The teacher continued to explain how student enjoyment influences her attitude toward teaching Latin. A different teacher connected the dots. She said, "I don't mind teaching it. The kids love it, and it's good for them."

According to the participants, the students find it fun and exciting not only because Latin is a unique part of their school day, but also because Latin instruction is engaging. In the five interviews, it was mentioned twenty-seven times that the

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elementary Latin content is an introduction, basic, new, and just the beginning. One teacher explained that it is “very low pressure.” Another teacher recounted that the Latin instruction is “basically memorizing the vocabulary.” She continued, “We do a few ending charts and chants, and we practice them so much that they’re usually not difficult... a subject in third grade that they feel successful in.” Each participant listed many instructional tools that the students enjoyed including chants, songs, charts, and games, Latin at the elementary level is described as fun not stressful by the students. During interviews, the act of memorizing was mentioned over twice as much as translating. The teachers explained that the purpose of Latin at the elementary level is to build a firm foundation of vocabulary and sentence structure, not necessarily to translate passages.

During each discussion, both *easy* and *hard* became words frequently mentioned. The teachers seemed to contradict themselves describing Latin as low stress and easy, and then hard and challenging. The interviews showed that the teachers believed both the content and pace of instruction left the student confident and successful. When discussing roadblocks with the participants, many mentioned parent attitudes and new students’ attitudes. The teachers explained that the content can seem hard, difficult, and challenging to students and parents who have had no previous exposure. One teacher said, “I run into parents who don’t know Latin and think they can’t help, especially as it gets higher up. I would say ‘come into the class’, and so I did have parents who would come in. They appreciated it because now they could help their children.” The teachers explained that, if accommodations were made for the new students and parents who

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wanted to be involved, most students found the content easy. Within the three Latin teachers' interviews, Latin as the favorite subject was mentioned seventeen times.

### **Teachers' Perspectives on Benefits of Latin in Grammar and Second Language Learning**

In the interviews, teachers' attitudes toward Latin were also influenced by their knowledge of how Latin helps in other content areas. The word "help" was the most frequently used in all five interviews with an overwhelming count of forty-two times. The participants were eager to talk about how Latin was a profitable area of study. The majority of the reasons listed for Latin's helpfulness involved its influence on other content areas. One participant said, "It (Latin) impacts a lot of areas... it helps grammar, English, vocabulary; understanding what does this big word here I can't even pronounce mean. Well take it apart, and you've got two Latin bits, and you know what those mean." Another teacher added, "I think it probably has helped them with standardized testing, it has helped them with understanding language, and I think it has probably helped with their writing and vocabulary." A different participant explained, "Latin is good, that's what I tell my students. It's a good thing, and it will help you later on. You hear people say it's a dead language, that no one speaks Latin. Well, they don't, but we don't know who the teachers, doctors, or pharmaceutical types will be... All that vocabulary will be helpful for those students. I know one of my students. His dad is a doctor. I know that he recognizes words. It helps greatly. It does."

The teachers described how, although their students are young, the students easily connect Latin to other content areas. During the interviews, teachers discussed

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connections made across subjects, applications students made with their Latin content, references students used, and similarities students mapped between content areas. They explained that Latin can act as a reinforcement in many subjects. There is a growing familiarity for the students as they see similar things in different focuses throughout the school day. All of the participants shared that they would attempt to integrate Latin content in other subjects. Sometimes the students would see the crossover on their own. Other times, the teacher would have to point out to them the connections. One teacher recounted, “We do love to look for derivatives in our literature books. They take turns reading aloud and every now and then they’ll be like ‘that was one of our Latin words!’ So, I would say that it helps us understand words, and it helps them learn new words. If we connect a vocab word to the Latin word that we know, they’re more interested in learning the definition of it because it has to do with Latin and that’s really exciting.” Another participant explained, “They (students) have gotten really excited because we are finding that in English we’re learning about direct objects, and then we’re finding the direct objects in Latin sentences. And so, they think that’s exciting not that Latin is starting to make sense to them as a language instead of just being these different parts that they memorize. They’re seeing how it goes together. Words have purpose in the sentences just like they do in English.”

When asked about the benefits of Latin in Grammar and second language learning, most teachers were able to list examples concerning grammar. None had experience of students learning a second language. They could not comment on possible benefits Latin might have on this subject. Teachers also listed other content areas influenced by Latin including math, science, and history.

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After all five interviews were analyzed, any mention of grammar, parts of speech, prefixes, suffixes, derivatives, roots, and more were counted. Any words used often in an English Language Arts classroom were tallied, and seventy-four mentions of these words were found in the five interviews. Teachers discussed a wide range of benefits including understanding the parts of a sentence, sentence structure, vocabulary, reading, and writing. One teacher said, “It (Latin) overlaps because a lot of times when we come to something new, particularly in Latin, you can say ‘remember where we talked about this last week in this class? Well, this is the same thing here. Now, we just take what we had over here and apply it over here, because you know, it’s the same. Verbs are verbs, and so on.’ It helps them make the connections that way.” Another teacher provided an example from her English Language Arts class. “We talk a lot about connotation. Is this a positive word? Or does this mean something good? Or does it mean something bad? And so, a lot of times our Latin vocab helps us with that, because if the Latin word means something bad then probably the English word means something bad too. That’s a fun connection to make.”

In the five interviews, the frequency of *reading* and *writing* were compared. Reading occurred over four times more frequently than writing. At the elementary level, the participants believed that the integration of Latin into the English Language Arts classroom benefitted the students more in their reading skills than writing skills. One teacher shared her own experiences of Latin. “And I think for me personally, Latin was helpful for me with my reading comprehension and just being able to understand things that I was reading, even if I didn’t know exactly what words meant. You draw a lot from

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roots and things like that. I think it can be really challenging, and so that's good for you. It's good to just work really hard to understand something that's so complex."

The teachers explained that English Language Arts was the subject area that they integrated Latin into most frequently. Still, Latin could be a reference for the vocabulary in any content area. One teacher provided an example. She remembered, "We talk about prefixes a lot, like centimeters in math. That's a hundred meters, because centum means one hundred. And so, that is helpful." Another teacher answered, "There are a lot of Latin words that come up that I do try to tie in wherever I can. Right now we're studying the solar system. We had already learned that sol goes with sun. Now, we're trying to tie in luna, and stella, and all these solar system words in science." Another teacher explains that she teaches about Ancient Rome in her History class. "There are so many things in History that will overlap. I've been teaching about the Romans as a unit... I really do like to crossover as much as I can with whatever will work. I wish it would do a little more for me, but it kind of has to be right in front of the kids to make that connection."

Participants talked a lot about how logical, methodical, and predictable the Latin language was. They found that the Latin structure helps the students to make connections with other content areas. One teacher expounded, "Even just the logical thinking helps with writing. I think because Latin is so logical, we have to sort it out with the little clues on the end of each word. I think it helps students sort out their English writing and good sentence flow." Another teacher described Latin, "It has a rhythm to it. It makes sense to them (students) in general." A different participant explained Latin. "It's like English in a sense. There is a system to it. You learn the method and the system, and you can do anything. It's like English, and I do see the crossover there." The participants described

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their instruction as a relationship between words and language, a part to whole relationship. The whole, the Latin language, is logical, methodical, and predictable. This structure helps students in the way they think. Still, the parts of the Latin language would be the Latin words and Latin vocabulary. “Words” versus “language” was used in the interviews two times more frequently. The participants saw more value and concentrated their instruction on Latin words. This frequency may have occurred due to the focus of Latin instruction at the elementary level- at this point, the teachers are laying the foundation. Students must have a firm grasp of the parts, the vocabulary of Latin, before they can comprehend the language as a whole.

### **Differences between Latin and English Language Arts Teachers**

The differences in attitudes between Latin and English Language Arts teachers were determined by the frequency of words used by those teachers. ELA teachers had very similar codes to the Latin teachers. The differences between teachers occurred mostly with the frequency amount for each code. Both sets of teachers agreed that they had positive attitudes toward Latin instruction in the elementary classroom. The English Language Arts teachers discussed in the interviews that they believed Latin was good and beneficial for their students. They also remarked that the students were confident and found the Latin content easy. The codes, “good”, “beneficial”, “confident”, and “easy” were used in the ELA teachers’ interviews almost as much as in the Latin teachers’ interviews. Nevertheless, the Latin teachers described the content as “fun” and “exciting” twenty-three times between the three interviews. The English Language Arts teachers did not use the codes, “fun” and “exciting”, once in the two interviews.

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The English Language Arts teachers expressed that they thought Latin was beneficial for their students, but they had a more difficult time listing the justification for their thoughts. They found it challenging to recall benefits of Latin. One English Language Arts teacher stated, “Latin is good. It’s a good thing. It’s a hard thing, but it’s a good thing.” This teacher seemed very unsure and sounded as if she was reassuring herself more than stating a fact. In the interviews, the participants discussed the meaning and purpose of Latin at the elementary level. The codes, “meaning” and “purpose” were discussed in the Latin teachers’ interviews twenty-nine times. The ELA teachers spoke of “meaning” and “purpose” twice in the entirety of their interviews.

The ELA teachers were asked questions about any evidence they observed that Latin content might benefit student understanding in grammar, vocabulary, reading, and more. The teachers discussed connections students made across content area concerning Latin; however, they only spoke of “connections” and “crossovers” half as often as the Latin teachers did. Moreover, they only spoke of Latin “helping” their students a third as often as the Latin teachers. Latin teachers spoke of integrating the Latin content in the other classes they taught, but the English Language Arts teachers did not see the benefits as clearly.

### **Discussion**

The results listed above have a strong correlation with the existing literature on Latin content in the classroom. In previous studies, teacher attitudes toward Latin were assessed in surveys and interviews. The interviews conducted in this study focused on teacher attitudes toward Latin in concern to the students’ success, attitudes, and ability to

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connect Latin content to other subject areas. The findings of this study were overwhelmingly positive. Likewise, Offenber (1971), in his study in Philadelphia, surveyed teachers and principals. Participants were asked to assess the success of Latin in the classroom, as well as the correlation between learning Latin and improvement on English vocabulary. The teachers and principals who responded to his survey agreed that Latin was successful and helpful to their students. As stated in the Literature Review, eighty-six percent of the principals and teachers believed that Latin helped the students' understanding of English vocabulary. Although in this study English Language Arts did not discuss the benefits of Latin content in their classrooms as often as the Latin teachers, they remained positive toward the success of Latin for their students.

Many participants of this study believed that Latin content could be integrated in an English Language Arts, Science, Math, and History classroom. The teachers described many opportunities for students to make connections between subject areas. Other studies have been performed to assess whether the study of Latin can improve student understanding in different content areas. Many researchers have studied students' scores on aptitude or achievement tests after learning Latin over a determined time period. Sheridan (1976) completed a study after his experimental group had one year and then three years of Latin instruction. He used an achievement test assessing word knowledge, language arts, and reading. His results showed great success for the Latin students in comparison to a control group. Surveys showed that teachers also affirmed the success of Latin for their students.

Compared to the literature on Latin instruction at the elementary level, the sample size was small for this study. To strengthen the results of this study, more participants

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would be helpful. Also, the study could have been improved by interviews with the school principal, parents, and students. Different outlooks could have painted a broader picture of various attitudes toward Latin instruction at the elementary level.

### **Limitations**

The limitations to this study are the small sample size of five participants and the absence of teachers who are familiar with the study of Latin but choose not to teach it. Also, all the participants were from the same school.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the following three research questions drove this study:

1. What are teacher attitudes toward Latin curriculum in elementary level classrooms?
2. How do teachers think Latin content can help students achieve in learning grammar and any second language?
3. What are the differences in attitudes toward Latin in elementary level classrooms between English Language Arts teachers and Latin teachers?

The study successfully answered each research question through five interviews with Latin and English Language Arts teachers.

The study found that teachers have very positive attitudes toward Latin curriculum in the elementary level. The attitudes depended largely on the student enjoyment of the content, as well as the student perspectives whether the content was doable or challenging. Moreover, teachers derived a lot of their opinions of Latin on the

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benefits Latin content can have in learning grammar and other content areas. The teachers were passionate and proud of their students for finding connections across subjects. They discussed how beneficial and helpful Latin was in concern to grammar, vocabulary, reading, and even math, science, and history. A possibility for future studies include interviewing principals, parents, and students concerning their attitudes toward Latin curriculum at the elementary level and the benefits they have observed due to the Latin content at the elementary level.

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**Appendix A**

## Interview Questions for Latin Teachers

1. What ages are your students?
2. How many years have you taught Latin?
3. Why do you teach Latin?
4. What effects have you observed in students as a result of studying Latin?
5. What grammatical effects of students who studied Latin?
6. What effects of students learning a second language who studied Latin?
7. What do you believe about Latin being taught in the elementary level?
8. What have you perceived in students who are taught Latin in the elementary level in comparison to students who are taught Latin later in their schooling?
9. What is your overall attitude towards the study of Latin?
10. What roadblocks have you been subjected to when teaching Latin?
11. What are the students' attitudes towards learning Latin?
12. What are the students' parents' attitudes towards learning Latin?
13. Do you believe the student benefits to learning Latin outweigh the costs of teaching it? Why?

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**Appendix B**

## Interview Questions for English Language Arts Teachers

1. What ages are your students?
2. How many years have you taught English Language Arts?
3. Do you have much experience with students who have been taught Latin at the elementary level?
4. What effects have you observed in students as a result of studying Latin?
5. What grammatical effects of students who studied Latin?
6. What effects of students learning a second language who studied Latin?
7. What do you believe about Latin being taught in the elementary level?
8. What have you perceived in students who are taught Latin in the elementary level in comparison to students who are taught Latin later in their schooling?
9. What is your overall attitude towards the study of Latin?
10. What roadblocks have you been subjected to when teaching students who are taught Latin?
11. What are the students' attitudes towards learning Latin?
12. What are the students' parents' attitudes towards learning Latin?
13. Do you believe the student benefits to learning Latin outweigh the costs of teaching it? Why?