Preliminary

I was approached in early 2019 with a request to teach a student to GCSE standard very quickly: the individual in question was faced with a need to take a Latin examination in Spring 2020, just over one year later. My first reaction was that the task might be impossible. Given that the stakes were high, however, we decided to give it our best shot and the results of the experiment are detailed here. It should be said that there were things that could have been better but also that the student did indeed reach the standard required in 34 lessons.

The Imperium Latin Course falls into 30 chapters, so the starting point was that the student, whom I shall call Matthew here, should complete one chapter per one-hour lesson. That is, he would do all the learning for each SQN section and be tested each time, and also he would use the mp3 files to assist in doing all the exercises in each chapter wherever possible along the way, along with the Imperium Word Tools App (starting after Chapter 8).

NB – I cannot over-emphasise enough my certainty that without the mp3 files and the App this task would not be possible in the time frame given.

My main concern with Matthew was that he actually over-used the mp3 files, which basically provide a full answer key to the course. In retrospect, I should perhaps have restricted access to them more carefully than I did at the start. Despite this, I am convinced that the experiment should be considered a huge success.

A brief lesson by lesson write-up follows, though if the general idea above is followed, it almost becomes redundant. It should be noted that a preliminary discussion had been held before the official start of the course and Matthew had been given assignments to learn for SQN 1 and 2 and do the translations of chapters 1 and 2. He had also been told that his required pass mark for SQN tests would be 8/10 each time. He was told to download various materials from the website including the practice tests, which he should make use of before each lesson.

A fairly flexible approach was adopted to background sections of the chapters, due to time constraints. Matthew was encouraged to read these in his own time at home. Likewise, once into Book 3, we had to miss many of the Martial poems due to a lack of time.

34 Lessons in outline

1. The official start. Matthew does SQN 1 and SQN 2 tests and we work through the translations of chapters 1 and 2. We read the grammar of chapters 1 and 2 and then read the grammar notes for Chapter 3. Talk about finding family connections, eg Hadrian/Trajan, Plotina/Sabina. SQN 1 and 2 were not done well so preparation for next lesson to include learning for SQN 1, 2 and 3 and all translations of Chapter 3.

2. Full written tests for SQN 1, 2 and 3. SQN 2 and 3 were inadequate but the SQN 1 was good. Give advice about learning formulae using chunking, as Matthew is not using system rules in writing his answers. Reciting is helpful and too much thinking in tests betrays a lack of learning. Use lists to make new lists based on what you don't know rather than the complete original. Recommend use to be made of Latin Vocab Drill software which can be downloaded free of charge from the website. Go through translations of Chapter 3 and read grammar for Chapter 4. Preparation for next lesson to include learning for SQN 2 and 3 and all translations of Chapter 4. Also, prepare for informal test of everything in chapters 1-4.

3.   Written tests for SQN 2 and 3 done to very high standard. The method is beginning to work. Go through all exercises in Chapter 4. Preparation for next lesson to include learning for SQN 4. Request not to use mp3 files for Ex 4.2.

4.   Written tests for SQN 4 and chapters 1-4 done to very high standard. Instructions given to keep looking for derivatives and to keep practising reciting. Go through all grammar in Chapter 5. Preparation for next lesson to include all exercises in Chapter 5 and learning for SQN 5. Request not to use mp3 files for Ex 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5.

5.   Written tests on verbs and vocab Chapter 5. The vocab isn't up to scratch so must be done again. Some problems noted with singulars/ plurals, explanations given. Go through all exercises in Chapter 5 and all grammar in Chapter 6. Preparation for next lesson to include all exercises in Chapter 6 and learning for SQN 5 vocab and 6.

6.   Written tests on vocab Chapter 5 and 6 – all very good. Instruction to keep a focus on knowing declension numbers. Go through all exercises in Chapter 6 and all grammar in Chapter 7. Do Exercise 7.2 together. Preparation for next lesson to include all exercises in Chapter 7 and learning for SQN 7. The week after that will be SQN 8 which is a lot of work, so start looking forward.

7.   SQN 7 test – very good. Go through all exercises in Chapter 7. Matthew does Ex 8.2 alone, to make sure he is understanding. Read all Chapter 8 grammar and background. Show clip from the film Alexander of when he first met his horse Bucephalus. Do Ex 8.3 together. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 8 and all exercises in Chapter 8.

8.   SQN 8 test, good. Go through all exercises in Chapter 8. Cover all language work in Chapters 9 and 10. Preparation for next lesson to include all exercises in Chapters 9 and 10 and learning for SQN 9 and 10. Don't look anything up or use mp3 for 10.4 and 9.2.

9.   SQN 9 and 190 written tests, excellent. Finish all exercises in Chapters 9 and 10. Spend time instructing proper use of Imperium Word Tools App. Key to this is the second screen not the first – don't just use it as a vocab look-up tool. Instruct reduced usage to be made of mp3 files. These are clearly being over-used now. Read Introduction to Book 2. Read grammar of Chapter 11. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 11 and all exercises in Chapter 11.

10. Both SQN 11 written tests. Read grammar and background of Chapter 12. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 12 and all exercises in Chapter 12. Also, do full attainment test for Book 1 in controlled conditions at home. Give some instructions about doing unseen translations.

11. Go through attainment test for Book 1. Go through all exercises in Chapter 12. Read grammar and background of Chapter 13. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 13 and all exercises in Chapter 13.

12. SQN 13 excellent. Go through all exercises in Chapter 13. Read grammar of Chapters 14 and 15. A bit short of time and consolidation will be required. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 14 and 15 and all exercises in Chapters 14 and 15.1.

13. SQN 14 test, all good. Go through all exercises in Chapters 14 and Ex 15.1. Explain about pronouns and show the interactions of ending of is-ea-id as opposed to others, eg ille, ipse. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 15 and all exercises in Chapters 15 so far not done. Do as much translation as possible in Chapter 16. Only use App or mp3 files in an emergency.

14. SQN 15 written test. Go through exercises in Chapter 15. Talk about cloze technique and how it helps in translations. Go through all grammar of Chapter 16. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 16 and all exercises in Chapters 16. Also, do the first unseen in open book conditions at home and bring in next time.

15. SQN 16 test. Go through unseen 1, identifying technique of working back after doing the verbs first. Go through all exercises of Chapter 16. Read grammar on pronouns in Chapter 17. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 17 and all exercises in Chapters 17. Read background Chapter 17.

16. SQN 17 test poorly done and will need a repeat. Go through all exercises Chapter 17 and read background Chapter 17 and 18 together. Preparation for next lesson to include a repeat of SQN 17 and if possible SQN 18. No exercises again until SQN 17 is sorted.

17. SQN 17 test much better but still not OK. Read all grammar Chapter 18. Preparation for next lesson to include a repeat of SQN 17 as well as 18. Do all exercises in Chapter 18.

18. SQN 17 and 18 tests. Read about nouns in Chapter 19. Go through exercises in Chapter 18. Read background in Chapter 19. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 19 and reading page 60 carefully. Do all exercises in Chapter 19 after learning has been done.

19. SQN 19 test. Go through exercises in Chapter 19. Read grammar Chapter 20. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 20 and all exercises in Chapter 20.

20. SQN 20 test very poor. Go through all exercises in Chapter 20 and read background. Issue 2 more unseens to be done at home. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 20 again properly, two unseens and attainment test for Book 2 to be done at home in controlled conditions.

21. Give back attainment test for Book 2 as well as two unseens. Test SQN 20, still very poor. Read Introduction for Book 3 and grammar of Chapter 21. Explain that we won't be doing the Martial's Messages because of time but that occasionally we may look at some of them. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 20 again and exercises 21.1. and 21.2.

22. SQN 20 test again. OK but only just. Give advice about looking up vocabulary and writing it down as an aide-memoire. Go through Ex 21.1. and 21.2, then go through Ex 21.4 together. Read the grammar of Chapter 22. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 21 before doing exercises 21.4, 21.5, 21.6. Also, do Ex 22.1 and 22.2.

23. SQN 21 test, OK. Go through all exercises completed from Chapters 21 and 22. Read notes about future and future perfect especially. Discuss death of Domitian and accession of Nerva. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 22 and remaining exercises in Chapter 22. Don't use mp3 files or App and don't be afraid to make mistakes.

24. SQN 22 test, good. Go through all exercises done in Chapter 22. Read grammar of Chapter 23. Read about correlatives, page 34 and language and social attitude, page 32. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 23 and remaining exercises in Chapter 23.

25. SQN 23 test, excellent. Go through all exercises Chapter 23. Read all grammar Chapter 24. Talk about how to use the Grammar and Syntax Guide. Read all language notes Chapter 26 and talk about the big SQN 26 test which is coming up. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 24 and 25 and exercises in Chapter 24.

26. SQN 24 very good. SQN 25 not so. Postpone retest of SQN 25 until SQN 26 has been done. Go through Specimen Test 1 together and talk about learning requirements for SQN 26. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 26.

27. SQN 26, very good but not quite there yet. Look at framework for participles and infinitives in particular. Look at sequence may, might, may have, might have. Go through exercises in Chapters 24 and 25. Preparation for next lesson to include ongoing SQN 26.

28. SQN 26, brilliant. Go through together and then go through first two boxes of Ex 26.1. Preparation for next lesson to include repeat of SQN 25 and all exercises in Chapter 26.

29. SQN 25 brilliant. Go through all exercises in Chapter 26. Read about Trajan's death in background section. Read all grammar Chapter 27. Preparation for next lesson to include repeat of SQN 27 and all exercises in Chapter 27.

30. SQN 27, not up to scratch. Relearn for next time. Read all grammar Chapter 28. Preparation for next lesson to include repeat of SQN 27 and 28.

31. SQN 27, excellent. Go through all translations of Chapter 27. Go through vocab list needed for the final end examination (not identified here). Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 28 and all exercises in Chapter 28.

32. SQN 28 test, v good. Go through all exercises in Chapter 28. Read all rules about Indirect Statement in Chapter 29. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 29 and all exercises in Chapter 29.

33. SQN 29 tests. Read all grammar in Chapter 30. Go through exercises in Chapter 29. Discuss Antinous in outline, which Matthew had been asked to read and discuss at home due to the sensitive nature of the material. Preparation for next lesson to include SQN 30 and all exercises in Chapter 30. Relearn for Nouns part of SQN 29 test.

34. SQN 29 Nouns test and SQN 30 test. Go through remaining exercises and read concluding remarks about the Latin course.