EULALIA

European Latin Linguistic Assessment

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership for Higher Education (2019-2022)

(2019-1-IT02-KA203-062286)

https://site.unibo.it/eulalia/en

O1: European Latin Language Certification – Basic Level
Methodological and Pedagogical tools
GUIDELINES
(English Version: 31.05.2021)

GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

EULALIA proposes a certification of linguistic competences in Latin modelled, in general terms, on the CEFR, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Given the numerous teaching traditions, methods and study plans that are used across Europe and the entire world to encourage the learning of Latin (a training itinerary that still involves millions of people), we believe it is worthwhile to provide a framework of reference that can focus on linguistic competences. Therefore, we hope that our proposal might be understood as a valid instrument to favour exchange and dialogue among teaching environments that, although different, share the same purpose: to promote the learning of a language with a well-known and important cultural value.

Thus, the Latin language, which, as such, is unquestionably comparable to modern languages, despite its undeniable and perfectly noticeable differences, is at the heart of our proposal. The clearest difference is that Latin has not been used as a language for communication in open environments for a long time. For most of its learners, the use of this language is basically linked to the reading and interpretation of texts that have been regarded for centuries as the bearers of a cultural tradition that, especially in Europe, is part of our history and therefore keeps raising new questions. Consequently, they are mostly complex texts that require adequate teaching methods that are sometimes different from those traditionally used for modern languages.

Above all, we regard Latin as a language of culture and not only a tool for daily communication. In other words, although we have a keen interest in learning how life in ancient times was conducted, we are aware that this knowledge must be largely acquired from the texts that have reached our days and that it lies in the words that we have inherited in the languages we currently express ourselves in.

Because of this, the first purpose of the EULALIA certification is to assess reading skills in relation to texts that are part of our cultural tradition. However, it does not disregard the importance of the originally interactive function of Latin, hence the (preferred) choice of

monolingualism and the proposal of exercises that also test certain language production skills. Regarding reading skills, EULALIA moves away from traditional translation-based methodologies to assess instead overall (and gradually more detailed) understanding of the Latin text. From this point of view, the clear separation between the assessment of Latin language skills and the assessment of target language skills makes EULALIA particularly useful in cases of multilingual student groups (see § 2.2). The attention paid to comprehension skills is also expressed in the use of tools that focus on hearing, by proposing audio versions of certain stimuli so that the understanding of the oral text may accompany that of the written text. This encourages the use of EULALIA in the case of visually impaired students.

The acquisition (and, therefore, assessment) of linguistic competences is gradual; thus, EULALIA is structured into two levels (Basic Level and Advanced Level), each of them with its own curriculum (for the Basic Level, see *infra* § 4).

Hence, EULALIA is suggested as a useful tool to integrate and, hopefully, streamline the numerous curricula that already exist. Its purpose is not to replace them, but, if anything, to create a channel of communication and promote beneficial exchanges for their common goal: knowledge of the Latin language.

EULALIA is not intended as a teaching method, but as an assessment tool. Our aim is not to promote a new method for the teaching of Latin, but only a way to measure and, therefore, assess specific competences in Latin. This is why the metalinguistic terminology of our certification tests is simplified and follows the internal categories of Latin as closely as possible, in such a way that students who have acquired their reading and linguistic analysis skills following different methods may understand it.

BASIC LEVEL GUIDELINES

1. Competences that are subject to certification

EULALIA's Basic Level certification certifies the following language skills: (1) ability to manage the understanding of an original Latin text (see § 3), understood as both the comprehension of the meanings conveyed by the text and as capacity to decode the surfacing morphosyntactic structures; (2) the capacity to manipulate such morphosyntactic structures.

1.1. Comprehension

Managing understanding means succeeding in extracting information from the text that is essential to grasp its meaning. For example, in a narrative text, to understand who the main character is, identify the key steps of the narrated *fabula* and the logical and chronological links that connect them. The decoding of the surfacing morphosyntactic structure entails being able to identify the morphological and syntactic structures envisaged in the syllabus for the Basic Level

and being capable of indicating their function in the text (for example, identifying the type of a pronoun and being able to identify its referent in the text).

1.2. Production

The Basic Level includes the certification of a set of minimum production competences, which are essentially the manipulation of the morphosyntactic structures included in the contents established for the Basic Level syllabus.

2. Knowledge and competences that are not subject to certification

The certification model proposed does not explicitly assess historical and cultural knowledge. Neither does the Basic Level assess translation skills, which are, on the other hand, subject to specific certification in the Advanced Level.

2.1. Historical and cultural knowledge

The nature of the competences that are assessed in our texts is strictly linguistic; thus, historical and cultural, or even literary knowledge of the context of Latin texts is not subject to direct assessment, but rather represent a prerequisite for the understanding of the text. For example, the exercises do not include questions such as: "What were the functions of the consuls in Rome?" (except when the text concerned accurately defines the *consul*'s functions). The assumption is rather that knowledge of the term *consul* implies broadly knowing the role that such magistrate played. If the text includes cultural references that cannot be inferred from familiarity with the basic lexicon, paratexts will be supplied (brief summaries, annotations and, in certain cases, pictures) to provide the particulars needed to guide understanding.

2.2. Translation skills

The Basic Level does not contemplate the certification of translation skills. Indeed, these competences are extremely interesting in terms of language certification –as proved by the fact that they have been recently incorporated into the certification of modern languages too– and have traditionally been integrated into the teaching of Latin.

However, the interlinguistic nature of translation should not be overlooked: to certify the translation of Latin into L1 means assessing not only the Latin language, but also production capacity in the target language. Likewise, the decision to certify the Latin language based on original texts, which are characterized by their highly elaborate style (they are generally literary texts), requires high levels of comprehension and, above all, production. Indeed, translating this type of texts involves a considerable command of L1. Therefore, we have decided to limit the certification of translation skills to the Advanced Level (B), which is typically approached by students who already have consolidated Latin comprehension skills and whose training has

already allowed them to refine the competences required for production in the target language, since the latter is not always the mother tongue of the student who is taking the certification test.

3. Texts that are subject to certification

The certification provided by EULALIA assesses the capacity to manage the reading of a short original text. The focus is placed on the understanding of the text rather than on the morphosyntactic decoding of isolated structures or more or less complex random isolated sentences, firmly believing that the purpose of knowledge and/or command of the most technical aspects of the Latin language is the most thorough and autonomous possible access to the Latin texts that are the basis of a large part of Europe's cultural tradition.

An "original" text is understood as one born in contexts where Latin was actively used for the purpose of giving life to a culturally significant way of communication. Thus, the Latin texts that are used for the certification test are not necessarily related to the classical canon of ancient authors but might also belong to different stages throughout the long history of the Latin language.

A fundamental characteristic is that the difficulty of the text used for the certification test matches the level: it must be, above all, understandable, in general terms (cf. § 1.1), for somebody who knows the specific lexicon and syllabus established for the Basic Level.

As far as possible, priority will be given to texts that are particularly coherent and, therefore, communicate their content in a self-supporting and effective way. For us it is important that whoever approaches these texts may perceive them as communicative acts and feel the need to extract their meaning through a process of understanding where the analysis of formal structures is closely linked to the analysis of the meanings conveyed by such structures. The texts may be slightly adapted or shortened to make them more accessible, but the main modification planned is the supplementary presence of monolingual annotations that, without suppressing the text's most complex parts, enable the association of complex terms and expressions with others that are familiar and within the students' reach.

4. Preliminary level: *Praeambulum*

EULALIA also encompasses the certification of a Preliminary Level, called *Praeambulum*, that certifies the capacity to manage non-original texts, meaning laboratory texts, simplified so that they only include the morphosyntactic structures envisaged in the respective syllabus. As a result, the proposed exercises (especially those linked to the analysis of the formal text or the manipulation of morphosyntactic structures) are less elaborate than those for Level A. The reference lexicon matches that of A1; nevertheless, in the case of certain terms included in the Preliminary Level, only knowledge of their most basic meaning is required.

The creation of the *Praeambulum* meets the requirement –perceived as such both by students who are taking their first steps in the study of Latin and by their teachers– of answering the goal of efficacy in the first stage of their training itinerary.

However, the *Praeambulum* cannot be regarded as a certification in the Latin language to its full extent, simply because it uses artificial texts that have not been produced with the purpose of actually communicating in Latin (they are not the product of communication in an open environment), but have been elaborated in a language laboratory (therefore, in a closed environment) with purely didactical purposes. Thus, those who pass the *Praeambulum* test might not yet be in the position to manage the comprehension of an original text, but have, nevertheless, completed part of the path that leads to it.

4.1. Sublevels A: A1 and A2

The Basic Level certification is structured into two sublevels: A1 and A2.

The difference between A1 and A2 lies, firstly, in the different length of the syllabus established for each level and, therefore, in the difficulty of the proposed exercises.

The exercises of the A2 level include comprehension questions that analyse more specific details than those approached in A1 and, as regards the analysis of formal structures, they are based on a broader syllabus.

These sublevels can be certified through two different tests, each of them based on a different text, or through a single test divided into two parts. In the case of a single test, each of its parts may propose the analysis of different sections of the same text.

The prerequisite is that the texts (or text) used in both tests be original (in the sense described in § 2).

5. Monolingualism

Latin is, as far as possible, the metalinguistic foundation of EULALIA. This decision stems from the need to align, where possible, the certification of Latin with that of modern languages, strengthening in students the idea that even today Latin still has a communicative function and can be used for interaction (although in a closed environment and limited to specific situations, one of them being, precisely, the certification).

Likewise, limiting the metalinguistic use of L1 or of a vehicular language such as English consolidates the idea, which is especially important for beginners, that the certification is focused on competences in the Latin language. During the pilot tests that we have given to students whose mother tongue was different from the instruction language, this aspect has proved especially motivating.

Nonetheless, the use of Latin as a metalanguage is not complete; Latin is used to build the initial exegetical foundation for the original text. This exegetical foundation includes the title and brief

summaries that precede the text, the annotations that accompany it to explain terms or phrases that do not refer to the basic vocabulary or syllabus (sometimes pictures may be used as an alternative to Latin), as well as the paraphrases that are the basis of some exercises.

On the other hand, the use of Latin as the metalanguage for the exercises that require morphosyntactic analysis has not been considered appropriate. Although it is true that Latin has its own categories to describe its morphosyntactic structures, they are not normally used in teaching. Hence, in this specific case we have preferred to choose L1.

6. Exercises and tests

To certify Basic Level competences, EULALIA proposes different tests based on a variety of exercises that are valid to certify the comprehension and production competences described above.

Comprehension competences, either linked to the texts' meanings or related to surface structures, are essentially verified through exercises where phrases are to be completed or transformed.

How tests are delivered and assessed is described in the attached documents that are provided with the test models.

The assessment threshold is different for each level: the *Praeambulum* requires 65% of the answers to be correct, whereas the necessary percentage for Level A is 75%. This proposed threshold is the result of pilot tests conducted in different educational environments (secondary education and pre-university course centres, and universities) of different countries.