

# A paradox of the linguistic research of Neo-Latin. Symptoms and causes

---

Demo, Šime

Source / Izvornik: **Suvremena lingvistika, 2022, 48, 1 - 17**

**Journal article, Published version**

**Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.22210/suvlin.2022.093.01>

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:111:782861>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-11-11**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of University of Zagreb, Centre for  
Croatian Studies](#)



Šime Demo

Fakultet hrvatskih studija, Sveučilište u Zagrebu

[sdemo@hrstud.hr](mailto:sdemo@hrstud.hr)

## **A paradox of the linguistic research of Neo-Latin. Symptoms and causes**

A vast majority of Latin texts available to us have been written after the Middle Ages. These writings are very diverse, culturally relevant, and interesting for linguistic research. Yet, this is not reflected in the scholarly attention given to post-medieval Latin. The research dealing with it is neither systematic nor up to date with the modern theoretical and methodological advances in linguistics. As nearly all linguists interested in Latin limit their investigations to the classical and medieval periods, the vast bulk of the texts written in Latin is severely under-researched. In this paper it is argued that the marginal position of post-medieval Latin in the research is caused by the preservation of traditional paths of work and that it is not tenable on the grounds of valid scientific reasoning. First, a definition of Neo-Latin is presented and the quantity of its texts is compared to the size of the ancient Latin literature. Then, a quantitative meta-analysis of several major publications in the fields of Latin linguistics and Neo-Latin studies is performed in order to determine the presence of linguistic research of Neo-Latin in them. In the following section, some important reasons why it is under-represented are singled out and contextualised within linguistic methodology and the history of the classical studies. By questioning their validity, a case is made for a full and consistent integration of the linguistic research of Neo-Latin into Latin linguistics.

---

### **1. Introduction**

A quarter century ago, while discussing respelling of Neo-Latin texts in modern editions, Edwin Rabbie argued for it by using, *inter alia*, the following argument:<sup>1</sup>

---

1 This paper has been written within the research project “Croatian Renaissance Aristotelianism: A New Era in Thinking the Past” (PI: Dr. Pavel Gregorić), funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (IP-2018-01-4966). Its main theses were presented at the Seventeenth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies (Albacete, 2018) and the Twentieth International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics (Las Palmas 2019). It is my pleasant duty to thank Marianne Pade, Hans Ramminger and the anonymous reviewers for the corrections, comments, ideas, and shared references.

“Linguistic investigations [of Neo-Latin texts] would in all probability not suffer by respelling the texts; first of all, such investigations hardly exist, and it seems doubtful whether they will ever become frequent (...)” (Rabbie 1996: 33)

Although these words of the editor of Erasmus have proven to overstate their case, they are far from being unwarranted. Despite the number and importance of the texts written in Latin of the Modern Era, the overwhelming bulk of linguistic research is still limited to its ancient varieties. It seems reasonable to investigate the reasons behind this fact.

### **1.1. Neo-Latin: A definition**

Neo-Latin (NL) is the term usually employed to designate varieties of Latin that began to appear during the 14th century, when Italian intellectuals, most notably Petrarch, started to consciously model their own Latin on what they considered to be the style of the best ancient authors. The new practice gradually spread, along with the ideology of the renewal of the ancient Graeco-Roman civilisation; within the next two centuries, all Latin Europe embraced humanist linguistic principles in most domains of use. Although Latin has been used until the present time, its heyday ended in the 18th century.

This is the definition of NL proposed by the International Association of Neo-Latin studies:

*‘Voces illae „Neolatinus“ et „Latinitas recentior“ litteras significant Latine cultas a primordiis Humanismi Italici.’* (N. N. 1977: 265)

*“By Neo-Latin is meant writings in Latin since the beginnings of Humanism.”*  
(N. N. 2009–2021)

Later scholars have maintained the definition and built upon it. However, the complexity of the picture should not drop out of sight. The spread of Italian humanism, along with its reform of Latin, was neither abrupt nor absolute. Its flavours of Latin gradually advanced for centuries at the cost of what is called Medieval Latin, supplanting it in many, but not all text types. For example, William of Ockham (c. 1287–1347) and Petrarch (1304–1374) were contemporaries (and even stayed in Avignon at the same time), but their respective varieties of Latin definitely belong to diverse linguistic subtraditions. Furthermore, one and the same author regularly switched between the registers when changing genres (see e.g., Canfora 2007, Pade 2020). Linguistic innovation was even capable of serving as a means of taking a stance in ideological controversies, for example in the early period of the Protestant reformation (see Ramming 2020).

Throughout the Early Modern Period, a wide array of idioms of Latin co-existed, ranging from the *recherché* humanist language to the varieties with a strong presence of typically vernacular, vulgar, and medieval features. Each period, even each user, brought some innovations into the system of the language, and these

large clouds that we call Medieval Latin and NL considerably overlap. This fact is captured in Ramminger's (2014: 21) need to give a twofold division of the definition of NL: "Chronologically it designates that phase of Latin which came after mediaeval Latin (...) Stylistically Neo-Latin is usually understood as the attempt to write Latin as it is written by the 'best' authors of antiquity."

The term "Neo-Latin" itself is not helpful: being an inaccurate translation of German *Neulatein*, the English version suggests that the phenomenon is centered around renewing a dead language, rather than being the most recent stage of Latin or a part of the Modern Era (Hendrickson 2018b). Additionally, the term is similar to the designation some languages use to refer to the Romance languages. Although the label "Neo-Latin" has been too well established to be disposed of, perhaps the most elegant solution would be to simply stick to chronological divisions by talking about „Early Modern Latin“ and (for the last two centuries) “Contemporary Latin” (analogously to “Ancient Latin” and “Medieval Latin”).

### **1.2. The amount of Neo-Latin texts**

The fact that NL is relatively scarcely researched is especially striking when one considers the quantity of the material written therein. The majority of all Latin texts available to us have been produced in the Early Modern Period and afterwards. We are still uncertain how large the corpus of NL is because even NL literary works in the narrow sense of the term have not been catalogued (one might just think of the sheer bulk of the occasional poetry or unpublished literature). This is also true for the bureaucratic writings (legal, military, ecclesiastical, and civilian protocols, registers, records, and the like), or educational documentation such as textbooks and theses. Works such as large encyclopedias, historiographical writings, or the enormous amount of early modern scientific, philosophical, and theological output greatly contribute to the size of the NL corpus.

We can be confident that future research will only increase the number of available NL texts; meanwhile, for Ancient Latin, all one can hope for is some new fragments. In 1998, a scholar listed all ancient Latin texts discovered from the 1960s onwards. The list contains 25 new items (of which 6 from non-Christian authors) (Dolbeau 1998, abstracted in Pearse 2003): a quantity that a researcher of NL can find alone in a few hours of serious fieldwork at the right place.

Even that what we know of exceeds ancient Latin literature by a huge factor. A clearer impression of this relationship can be obtained through a few comparisons between ancient and post-medieval Latin literature. The size of the entire corpus of the preserved Latin literature in a broad sense (everything written for publication, therefore excluding inscriptions and papyri), produced from the beginning up to 200 CE and published in the PHI Latin library, is about nine million words (N. N.

2015, Solberg 2017: 5).<sup>2</sup> The collection contains 836 works written by 362 authors. In contrast – to select only one national tradition, only poetry, and only one century – French Latin versifiers produced (according to a provisional bibliography) around 3,800 original NL works only in the 19th century, after the high point of NL had ended (Sacré and Jalabert 2010). Furthermore, the Heidelberg/Mannheim collection *Camena*, oriented towards, but not limited to the German-speaking area, contains some 285,500 digitised printed pages of NL material (N. N. 2013). A very conservative estimate of 350 words per page makes it comprise 100 million words. Only a part of it, reaching 50 million words, was converted to XML-format. Finally, the digital archive of Neo-Latin texts compiled for the *Neulateinische Wortliste* (Ramminger 2003–) contains over 500 million words (Johann Ramminger, personal communication, 6 July 2020). All these numbers barely scratch the surface of NL texts in print; additionally, the size of NL materials in manuscript – preserved for example in numerous archives – is unknown.

## 2. Symptoms

The field of Neo-Latin linguistics can be represented as a zone intersecting between Latin linguistics and Neo-Latin studies (Figure 1). Latin linguistics deals with the linguistic structure of Latin, while Neo-Latin studies covers a wide array of topics related to the early modern texts written in Latin, including their language. Notwithstanding a considerable number of researchers specialising in each of these areas, the linguistic aspect of Neo-Latin, given its importance and the prospects it opens, is still quite under-researched. Additionally, a systematic communication and collaboration between these two groups of researchers is hardly existent.

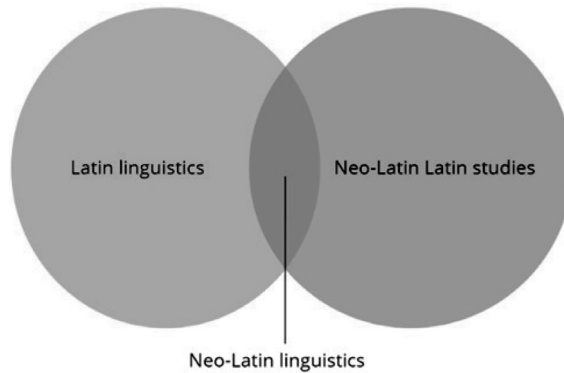


Figure 1. NL linguistics at the intersection between Latin linguistics and Neo-Latin studies.

2 I do not have exact data for the later period of Ancient Latin, which, of course, does not end in 200 CE. Many works, especially Christian, were written afterwards. This may double or triple the size of the corpus of Ancient Latin. Still, the linguistic research of Latin is mainly focused on works that were produced in the earlier period.

## 2.1. State of the affairs

Most of the linguistic studies in the post-medieval stage of the Latin language have been done by the scholars belonging to the Neo-Latin research community. By contrast, Latin linguistics, being in practice the research of ancient Latin, has treated NL as a semilegal intruder. Researchers have been aware for a long time that Ancient Latin and NL are a part of the same system (see e.g., Norden 1898: 763–809, Meillet 1933: 283–284, Kluge 1935); however, in the recent literature, the latter is frequently ignored, even when the title of a research paper or book suggests that the entirety of the language is covered (for example, Harrison ed. 2007, Halla-aho 2012, Adamik 2015). A particular symptom of this state of affairs is that the term “Late Latin” has been traditionally employed for the last period with native speakers of Latin, thus preceding the majority of Latin texts. For a traditional linguist of Ancient Latin, this designation might look reasonable; however, from a Medievalist or Neo-Latinist perspective, it could be argued not only to make little sense but also to sound somewhat demeaning in relation to the later periods.

The main conference for Latin linguists is the biennial *International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics (ICLL)*, which has been held since 1981. Although nothing in its name reveals its focus on Ancient Latin, a typical call for papers limits the coverage to the period up to 600 CE:

“The conference (...) will be devoted to all aspects of Latin linguistics, whether from a synchronic or a diachronic perspective, **corresponding to the period covered by the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae***.” (N. N. 2019, my emphasis)

Nonetheless, in reality the borders are broader. The fact that the papers covering Medieval Latin or NL are not rejected *a limine* proves that even uninvited guests are welcomed. This can be viewed as an indicator of the unclear status NL, along with Medieval Latin, has had within the field of Latin linguistics.

Another pivotal research forum in the field, the *Journal of Latin Linguistics (JoLL)*, made a step further in the recognition of non-Ancient Latin. In the 2013 introductory statement, the editors gave NL due attention, as their call for papers states: “All linguistic phases of Latin – Archaic, Classical, Vulgar, Medieval, Renaissance, Modern – are treated’ (Calboli and Cuzzolin 2013).” Moreover, the statement itself opens with a reference to a NL work:

“Latin is a corpus language with an impressively rich textual and intellectual tradition. The language was passed down through manuscripts and inscriptions and was the *lingua franca* in international communication and scientific writing, scholarship, and science until well into the 18th century. The greatest corpus of fundamental works as Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* has been written in Latin.” (Calboli and Cuzzolin 2013)

Despite its size and importance, NL has been given a rather marginal place within Latin language research. It has not been properly included into general ref-

erence works on Latin. Traditionally, surveys of the history of Latin (and its periodisations) used to mention it parenthetically or not at all. Recently, several monographs have included NL into the overall picture of the history of Latin (e.g., Farrell 2001, Janson 2004, Leonhardt 2009, Clackson ed. 2011), but they are still heavily outnumbered by those that do not. Furthermore, modern linguistic models and quantitative methods are used for dealing with NL only very exceptionally. Finally, the research is fragmented and unsystematic: it is neither organised in terms of, for instance, projects or volumes or conferences devoted to it, nor integrated with the linguistics of Ancient and Medieval Latin. This final aspect will be observed in the next section, on the example of the most prominent periodical publications in the relevant fields.

## 2.2. Example: Linguistic research of NL in some key publications

One important indicator of the status of a topic in a research community is its presence in professional periodical publications. At this juncture, we will examine the number of papers dealing with the structure of NL, which have been published in the past five decades (since the official establishment of Neo-Latin studies in 1971) in several relevant key journals and proceedings. Latin linguistics and Neo-Latin studies are each covered by three of them (see Table 1):

Title	Started in	Years covered
<i>Glotta. Zeitschrift für griechische und lateinische Sprache</i>	1907	1971–2019
<i>Journal of Latin Linguistics</i> <sup>3</sup>	1980	1980–2018 <sup>4</sup>
Proceedings of the <i>International Colloquium of Latin Linguistics</i>	1981	1981–2019 <sup>5</sup>
<i>Humanistica Lovaniensia. Journal of Neo-Latin Studies</i>	1968	1971–2019
<i>Neulateinisches Jahrbuch. Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature</i>	1999	1999–2019
Proceedings of the <i>International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies</i>	1973	1971–2018 <sup>6</sup>

Table 1. Key periodical publications included in the analysis.

In the three Latin linguistics publications, I sorted the papers into four categories:

- GL/AL (general Latin/Ancient Latin): papers wherein the title does not declare the period covered, but the examples are exclusively from Ancient Latin. These papers ostensibly deal with the entire Latin, but effectively

3 Until 2013 *Papers on grammar*.

4 The 2019 volume is excluded, as it is devoted to the teaching of Latin.

5 The year is the conference year, not the publication year.

6 The same as footnote 4.



analyse only Ancient Latin. The results can sometimes be applied to other periods of Latin as well.

- AL (Ancient Latin): papers explicitly performing an analysis exclusively on ancient texts. Includes also Vulgar Latin (with studies on the development of the Romance languages), as well as literary Latin up to the Carolingian Renaissance, thus chronologically entering the Middle Ages.
- ML (Medieval Latin): standardised Latin used when Latin lost its native speakers, from the Carolingian Renaissance up to NL.
- NL (Neo-Latin): in accordance with the definition given at the beginning of the present paper, with the inclusion of Contemporary Latin.

Metalinguistic papers are not included. If the analysis draws examples from two periods, each is assigned 0.5, and if all periods are covered, each of the four categories gets 0.25. The *Journal of Latin Linguistics* (during the period when its title was *Papers on grammar*) also contains articles on Greek, and *Glotta*, on Greek, Etruscan, and other ancient languages; they are, naturally, omitted here.

The distribution of the papers in the three Latin linguistics publications is presented in Table 2.

	<i>Glotta</i>	<i>JoLL</i>	<i>ICLL</i>	Totals
<b>GL/AL</b>	119	92.25	528.5	<b>739.75</b>
<b>AL</b>	160.5	47.25	300	<b>507.75</b>
<b>ML</b>	0.5	0.25	6.5	<b>7.25</b>
<b>NL</b>	0	1.25 <sup>7</sup>	3 <sup>8</sup>	<b>4.25</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>1,259</b>

Table 2: Distribution of the papers in three key periodical publications in Latin linguistics (1971–2019).

Out of 1,259 papers, only seven include some form of analysis of NL. The figures are only slightly higher for Medieval Latin, although the corpus of medieval texts is also enormously larger than what we have from the classical antiquity. In *Glotta*, despite a notable precedent in Kluge (1935), not a single paper published in the last fifty years deals with NL.

The results indicate that NL is heavily underrepresented, although the titles of these publications suggest that they cover the entire history of Latin. We cannot even notice an increasing trend in its introduction. There is an organised effort in the research of Vulgar Latin and, to a certain extent, Medieval Latin, but nothing comparable for NL.

In an analogous analysis of the main serial publications in Neo-Latin studies, I classified as linguistic only those papers in which the linguistic analysis of NL is

7 Two papers: 1+0.25.

8 Five papers: 1+1+0.5+0.25+0.25.



the main topic, and not one of the *obiter* observed aspects of a text or an author. Papers on *imitatio* and rhetoric not interfering with the linguistic structure are not included – only what would be a part of linguistics in the modern sense of the word. The same applies for the “external” history of the language, as well as for the papers on metalinguistic topics (e.g., on NL grammars and dictionaries of Ancient Latin, not covering the structure of NL).

The results are given in Table 3.

	<i>HL</i>	<i>NLJB</i>	<i>IANLS</i>	<i>IANLS</i>	Totals
<b>Other</b>	722	269	1194	1,194	<b>2,185</b>
<b>Linguistic</b>	74	8	35	35	<b>117</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>1,299</b>	1,229	<b>2,302</b>

Table 3: Distribution of the papers in three key periodical publications in Neo-Latin studies (1971–2019).<sup>9</sup>

The table shows that in the publications devoted to Neo-Latin studies, linguistic aspects of the language are more frequently represented than in the former group. Out of a total of 3,561 papers in all six publications, 124 (or 3.48%) deal with the linguistic structure of NL. Of these 124, an overwhelming majority (117, or 94.35%) is from the key publications in Neo-Latin studies.

The proportion of NL linguistic papers in the six publications analysed can be visually represented as in Figure 2.

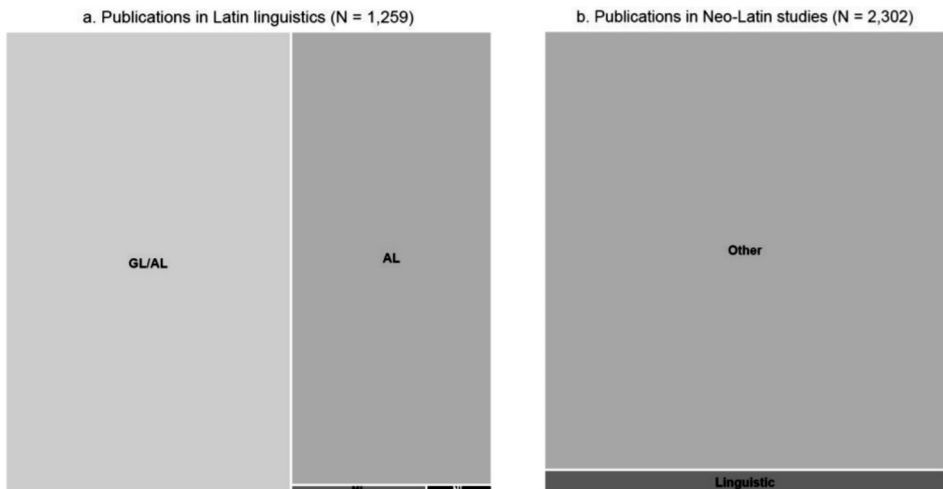


Figure 2. Treemaps of the number of NL linguistic papers compared to the total number of papers in six key publications analysed.

9 In *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 44 items are *instrumenta lexicographica*, the lists of NL words from the respective current issues, which were published from 1974 to 2017.

### 3. Causes

In the following subsections, I attempt to develop a discussion of some conscious as well as subconscious causes of the paradoxical state of affairs in the matters of the linguistic description of NL. The section is organised along four topics: nativeness, linguistic relevance, cultural relevance, and tradition.

#### 3.1. Nativeness

The most obvious general trait of NL is that its users, in contrast to their ancient counterparts, were not native Latin speakers. Although the difference is fundamental, it is an insufficient reason to exclude NL from linguistic study. In the first place, such exclusion would not be consistent, because throughout history, many people used languages not native to them, yet their non-native usage has been a legitimate and interesting object of linguistic study. There is no need for a Latinist to search for examples among countless modern exophonic authors – such as Samuel Beckett, Jack Kerouac, Milan Kundera, Ayn Rand, and the first generation of Modern Israeli Hebrew users – Roman antiquity itself offers non-native Latin speakers such as Greek-speaking authors of Latin epigraphs, or those who were very probably so (e.g., Livius Andronicus, Ennius, Plautus, Terence, Apuleius). Nobody questions the usefulness of the linguistic study of such authors.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, non-nativeness makes NL especially interesting for scholarly scrutiny. Studies in second language acquisition and competence are an indispensable and well-developed branch of linguistic research of modern languages. Similarities and distinctions between the usage of native and non-native users at different linguistic levels point to various psychological mechanisms at work in processing language. This type of research has been most extensively applied on modern settings such as language teaching and immigrant language, but it can also be (and has been) performed on historical texts.

#### 3.2. Linguistic relevance

NL is sometimes viewed as a sterile imitation of Classical Latin, which did not bring anything new to the language. Many a researcher explicitly or implicitly accepted Norden's contention that humanists, attempting to restore the ancient language, dealt a deathblow (*Todesstoß*) to lively and original Medieval Latin (Norden 1898: 767; see reactions in IJsewijn 1973, Briesemeister 1996: 118, Ludwig et al. 2003: 403, Berschin 2009: 192, Pade 2017). Thus, the fact that the interest in describing its linguistic structure is not burning does not surprise.

To begin with, Norden's attitude is misplaced because it overestimates the influence of the extreme Ciceronianism of the early 16th century, which was a minor-

---

10 See e.g., Hendrickson (2018a). There were also, of course, native Latin speakers who wrote in Ancient Greek, e.g., Favorinus or Marcus Aurelius.

ity movement, and which, as has been proven, did not prevail in humanist stylistic discussions. Even the strictest Ciceronians departed from the classical norms not only in less detectable linguistic phenomena but also at a basic level of grammar and lexical semantics (see Tunberg 1997, IJsewijn and Sacré 1998: 412–415, Tunberg 2003: 219). The majority of the early modern authors rejected extreme Ciceronianism: it was not established in the classrooms and general perception of Latin before the antibarbari and school systems of the 19th century.

Furthermore, following this line of reasoning, we could say that every ancient writer in some way copies their own forerunners, with relatively little innovation. Thus, Seneca's language would not be worthy of research because his basic linguistic structures and vocabulary are copied from Cicero and other earlier writers.

However, even if Neo-Latin writers had been utterly uninventive language-wise, the mere fact that they used to generate Latin phrases is sufficient to make their language an object of scholarly interest. A claim can even be put forward that the NL texts reflect a contemporary linguistic situation better than the ancient Latin writings because in the former case, a much higher proportion of the texts has been preserved.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.3. Cultural relevance**

When a language achieves a certain level of cultural development, one of its varieties becomes codified and employed in higher domains of use. In colloquial parlance, this variety can be treated as equivalent to the language as a whole (Wardhaugh 2006: 40). When we say we used to learn English at school, without a further qualifier, we usually mean some sort of standard, rather than, say, Puerto Rican English as spoken in New York City. In Latin, this variety is Classical Latin, which developed in the last centuries BCE and stayed more or less fixed, whereas its vernacular counterparts developed into the Romance languages. Through various efforts, starting in antiquity, Classical Latin served as the basis for standard Medieval Latin and for NL.

Ancient Greco-Roman culture has had an unparalleled role in the history of Western civilisation. As a consequence, Ancient Greek and Classical Latin are still taught in schools and at the universities. The same reason contributes to the fact that Latin linguistics is strongly biased towards favouring ancient Latin texts. Therefore, motives that do not belong to linguistics dictate the direction of linguistic research, and the consequence is that the non-ancient idioms of NL lack scholarly attention.

Without denying the merits of the ancient Greek and Roman heritage, the advances in Neo-Latin studies have fostered the understanding of medieval and modern Latin culture as something important in its own right, rather than mere

---

11 For this problem, see Van Hal (2010: 12–13). The issue is extensively discussed in Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* (1528).

rehashing of ancient models (see Ford 2000: 293). Chronological precedence of the Classical Antiquity does not preclude the importance of later events. Yet, the scholarly attention given to the language of the texts that describe ancient periods – exactly because of their cultural relevance – has the consequence of overrating the importance of these events compared to the later periods. Otherwise, the political situation of the 1st century BCE Rome, mental health of the early Roman Emperors, the episode with the holy geese, or the Punic Wars would be much more relevant for us than the events such as the Spanish discovery of the Americas, the Protestant Reformation, the witch hunts, the Scientific Revolution, the Thirty Years' War, the establishment of the colonial world, the wars between the Europeans and the Ottoman Empire, the rise of capitalism, and the breakthroughs of the early modern science, all of which for the largest part are reported in Latin. In the same manner, authors such as Silius Italicus, Curtius Rufus, and Claudius Claudianus would be more significant than Petrarch, Erasmus, Francis Bacon, Kepler, Copernicus, Spinoza, Newton, and Linné.

Despite the impression created by our educational curricula, many European nations have more reasons to relate to NL than to Ancient Latin. This premise applies not only to those whose territories were outside the ancient Roman borders – e.g., Czechs, Poles, Danes, and Swedes – but also those walking over Roman roads and past their monuments, such as Croats, who kept Latin as the official language until 1847 and who, by the nineteenth century, produced more texts in Latin than in all other languages taken together, including their native tongue.

I have devoted four paragraphs to the cultural relevance of Latin in an act of a necessary concession to the classicist tradition. However, it is not required from a purely linguistic perspective. Modern linguistics does not discriminate between the varieties of a language by their literary and cultural importance in this manner. Quite to the contrary, the forms of speech most remote from superposed standard varieties have a privileged position in social dialectology. For modern linguists, spontaneous, everyday communication does the best job of representing a language and is thus more interesting than elaborate literary texts. This attitude explains why they are equally (or more) excited when travelling to New Guinea to describe an endangered language used by a dozen of speakers as they are when they search for patterns in a well-established literary genre of a language with millions of users and centuries of written culture.

In contrast to literary theory or cultural studies in general, linguistics does not need to create textual canons. Linguistics forms research corpora according to the needs of its current research. There is no *per se* “good” or “bad” form of language, or a more interesting, a more beautiful, a more valuable, a more logical, or a more functional one. Cultural relevance is not a valid reason for a linguist to exclude a part of a language from consideration. Linguists can conduct research on a language for the sake of language research, even if the cultural relevance of a text is considered low. Every language and every variety are equally interesting to a linguist, notwith-

standing its cultural baggage. This aspect is openly acknowledged by everyone, but in practice, in terms of the classical languages, cultural relevance is assigned undue importance. Paradoxically, the cultural relevance of the classical world is ultimately the reason why even culturally less salient ancient texts obtain more linguists' scholarly attention than the important texts from the later periods.

The standard forms of a language have their own functions, in the same way that non-standard idioms have theirs. Certainly, one kind of idiom can contain what would be considered inappropriate expressions or even errors in another kind, but every idiom is evaluated according to its function. For example, the function of a monastery chronicle is to convey a certain type of information, and the function of a lyric poem, another. The language of lyric poetry is typically inappropriate for a chronicle; its specific devices can even obscure useful information.

Classical Latin is the backbone of all varieties of NL. It has been not only the guarantee of mutual intelligibility but also, in the first place, the glue that made sure the language would neither dissolve nor creolise. Therefore, any analysis of NL must refer to Classical Latin in one way or another. However, this does not mean that the varieties of NL that are closer to Classical Latin deserve more attention by the linguists. In fact, it could be convincingly argued that the varieties departing more from the literary standard (e.g., technical literature, being under stronger influence from the contextual factors such as geography and personal background of the writer) are linguistically more interesting. The linguist's view is that these departures, if they effectively serve their function, do not damage, but enrich language.

### 3.4. Tradition

The reasons why NL is under-researched are not limited to the three abstract concepts discussed above. They also have a material, institutional aspect.

At the turn of the 19th century, when classical philology was established as an independent discipline, Latin language study became its vital part. In the educational system of the Humboldtian university, inaugurated about the same time, Latin was taught almost exclusively as the language of the classical antiquity. Even the classical Latin literature itself was often considered an unoriginal imitation of the Greek model, while post-ancient developments in Latin were completely out of the picture. A sharp, albeit unnatural, division was established between ancient and modern literatures. Latin of the Early Modern Period could not compete with the modern languages in the framework set by nationalist and evolutionary historiographical paradigms born in the Enlightenment and fully developed in the nineteenth century, which advanced the notion of one-to-one mapping – embodied in the idea that language reflects the *Volksgeist* – between nation and language. The use of Latin by the Renaissance humanists was even thought to have hampered the advancement of national cultures (Celenza 2004: 1–4). Because of the lack of inter-

est for Renaissance Latin literature, the linguistic structures of its varieties were also neglected.

The consequences are still strongly felt: the departments that offer programs (or jobs, for that matter) in post-medieval Latin are relatively rare, and students have slender chances of developing an interest in it (see Hofmann 2000: 69–72, Verbaal 2007, De Smet 2009: 833–834, Turner 2014: 274–305, Sidwell 2016: 24, Hendrickson 2018b). The importance of the use of Latin in early modern Europe (discussed above, under ‘Cultural relevance’) is inadequately reflected in the institutional support that Neo-Latin studies obtain at the international, national, or university level.

The establishment of the Neo-Latin studies in the 1970s and its subsequent development modified this state of affairs in some respects.<sup>12</sup> When NL literature emerged from academic oblivion, it initially aroused the interest of those who saw a pragmatic value in it – scholars of modern literatures, historians, philosophers – but also classicists who were excited about the reception of the ancient culture and the early modern interpretations of the old Roman authors. Although various branches of Neo-Latin studies are successfully struggling their way towards the academic mainstream, linguistic research, lacking the aid of linguistics in general and Latin linguistics in particular, remains one of the least developed parts of the field.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Latin is not the only language that was actively employed long after it had lost all native speakers. However, few other such languages, if any, were used in such a wide range of contexts, for such diverse functions, in such a broad territory, with such high intensity, and through such a long period. Latin was the vehicle of the substantial part of literature, science and politics in medieval and early modern Europe and their overseas territories. It could serve all its users’ needs fairly well; however, early modern Europeans had to cope with a different reality than ancient Romans and often searched for innovative solutions at various linguistic levels. Linguistics, in collaboration with Neo-Latin studies, can unearth hidden patterns in the relationship of the language and the early modern culture and, by implication, might foster our understanding of the phenomena that fascinate many.

As far as linguistic interest is concerned, most Latin texts are placed off the map. I have argued that the reasons for this state of affairs are historical rather than scientific. The consequence is that an important, yet very small subset of texts captures almost all of Latin linguists’ work energy. Recent theoretical advances in linguistics, which have already been applied to ancient varieties of Latin, such as cognitivism, functionalism, language acquisition theories, modern semantics, and pragmatics, are still largely unused in the study of NL. The situation can be im-

---

12 W. Ludwig in Helander et al. (2001: 67); but see also J. Haskell in Helander et al. (2001: 48), who paints a gloomier picture.



proved if the investigations of all the periods of the Latin language are united into a single research system. This inference implies that the Latin linguists should, first, include NL into their horizon, and second, join forces with Neo-Latin scholars, in the same way they have cooperated with the classicists. Although many linguists are also Latinists, few of them focus on the early modern use of the language.

Each researcher is free to take up any topic or period that they fancy; nonetheless, a certain responsibility for the description of the most recent stage of the Latin language rests especially with Latin linguists, for the simple reason that they are the most qualified for this task. This type of research is currently hosted by Neo-Latin studies, where it only partly belongs, still waiting in the lobby to be ushered into Latin linguistics, its natural environment.

## References

- Adamik, Béla (2015). The periodization of Latin – an old question revisited. Gerd Haverling, ed. *Latin Linguistics in the Early 21st Century: Acts of the 16th International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics, Uppsala, June 6th–11th, 2011*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 640–652
- Berschin, Walter (2009). Is there such a thing as a Latin epochal style? Verbaal, Wim, Yanick Maes, and Jan Papy, eds. *Latinitas Perennis. Volume Two: The Appropriation of Latin Literature*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 181–200
- Briesemeister, Dietrich (1996). Neulatein. Holtus Günter, Michael Meltzeltin, and Christian Schmitt, eds. *Lexikon der romanistischen Linguistik. Vol. II.1: Latein und Romanisch; historisch-vergleichende Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 113–120
- Calboli, Gualtiero, and Pierluigi Cuzzolin (2013). [Editorial statement]. *Journal of Latin Linguistics*, [www.degruyter.com/view/journals/joll/joll-overview.xml](http://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/joll/joll-overview.xml) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Canfora, Davide (2007). Linguistic unity and variety of styles: The Latin of Poggio Bracciolini. Verbaal, Wim, Yanick Maes, and Jan Papy, eds. *Latinitas Perennis. Volume One: The Continuity of Latin Literature*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 53–62
- Celenza, Christopher S. (2004). *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
- Clackson, James, and Geoffrey Horrocks (2007). *The Blackwell History of the Latin Language*. Malden; Oxford; Victoria: Blackwell
- Croll, Morris W. (1966). *Style, Rhetoric and Rhythm. Essays by Morris W. Croll*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- De Smet, Ingrid A. R. (1999). Not for classicists? The state of Neo-Latin studies. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89: 205–209, <https://doi.org/10.2307/300741>
- Dolbeau, François (1998). Découvertes récentes d'oeuvres latines inconnues (fin IIIe – début VIIIe s.). *Sacris Erudiri* 38: 101–142
- Farrell, Joseph (2001). *Latin Language and Latin Culture: From Ancient to Modern Times*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613289>



- Ford, Philip (2000). Twenty-five years of Neo-Latin studies. *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 2: 293–301
- Halla-aho, Hilla (2012). What does 'Latin' mean? A terminological pamphlet. Leiwo, Martti, Hilla Halla-aho, and Marja Vierros, eds. *Variation and Change in Greek and Latin*. Helsinki: Foundation of the Finnish Institute at Athens, 13–23
- Harrison, Stephen (ed.) (2007). *A Companion to Latin Literature*. Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996683>
- Helander, Hans et al. (2001). SO debate. Neo-Latin studies: significance and prospects. *Symbolae Osloenses* 76: 5–102
- Hendrickson, Tom (2018a). A defining moment for Neo-Latin studies. A review of Milena Minkova's Neo-Latin anthology. Kuhner, John Byron, ed. *Medium.com* > *In Medias Res*, 23 October, [medium.com/in-medias-res/a-defining-moment-for-neo-latin-studies-7d2e28e0be2b](https://medium.com/in-medias-res/a-defining-moment-for-neo-latin-studies-7d2e28e0be2b) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Hendrickson, Tom (2018b). Why so few of us teach Neo-Latin. And why more of us should. *Eidolon*, 12 March. [eidolon.pub/why-so-few-of-us-teach-neo-latin-3f85eb1984b6](https://eidolon.pub/why-so-few-of-us-teach-neo-latin-3f85eb1984b6) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Hofmann, Heinz (2000). Neulateinische Literatur: Aufgaben und Perspektiven. *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 2: 57–97
- Hoven, René, (avec la collaboration de / assisted by) Laurent Grailet (2006). *Lexique de la prose latine de la Renaissance / Dictionary of Renaissance Latin From Prose Sources*. Leiden; Boston: Brill
- IJsewijn, Jozef (1973). Inaugural address. IJsewijn, Jozef, and Eckhard Kefler, eds *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis. Proceedings of the First International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Louvain, 23–28 August 1971*. Leuven: Leuven University Press; Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 17–19
- IJsewijn, Jozef, and Dirk Sacré (1998). *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies: Part II: History and Diffusion of Neo-Latin Literature*. Leuven: Leuven University Press
- Janson, Tore (2004). *A Natural History of Latin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Kluge, Otto (1935). Die neulateinische Kunstprosa. *Glotta* 23: 18–80
- Leonhardt, Jürgen (2009). *Latein. Geschichte einer Weltsprache*. München: Verlag C. H. Beck.
- Ludwig, Walther, Reinhold F. Gleis, and Jürgen Leonhardt (2003). Klassische und neulateinische Philologie: Probleme und Perspektiven. *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie. Neue Folge* 146/3–4: 395–424
- Meillet, Antoine (1933). *Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue latine*. Paris: Librairie Hachette
- N. N. (1977). Statuta Societatis Internationalis Studiis Neolatinis Provehendis. *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 26: 265–271
- N. N. (2009–2021). Statutes in English. Ramminger, Johann, ed. *Societas Internationalis Studiis Neolatinis Provehendis*, <http://ianls.com/index2.html?top0.html&0:home.html&2> (accessed June 29, 2021)
- N. N. (2013). CAMENA – Lateinische Texte der Frühen Neuzeit; Corpus Automatum Multiplex Electorum Neolatinis Auctorum; TERMINI – Vernetzter Wortschatz lateinischer Wissensliteratur der Frühen Neuzeit. Gruhl, Reinhard et al., eds *CAMENA – TERMINI*, [mateo.uni-mannheim.de/camenahtdocs/camena.html](http://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/camenahtdocs/camena.html) (accessed June 29, 2021)

- N. N. (2015). The Latin texts. Packard Humanities Institute, eds *Classical Latin Texts. A Resource Prepared by The Packard Humanities Institute (PHI)*, <https://latin.packhum.org> (accessed June 29, 2021)
- N. N. (2019). Welcome. Cabrillana Leal, Concepción, ed. *ICLL2021*. <https://www.icll2021.com/> (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Norden, Eduard (1898). *Die Antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance. Zweiter Band*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner
- Pade, Marianne (2017). [Review:] Patrick Baker, *Renaissance Humanism in the Mirror. Ideas in Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, July, [bmc.brynmawr.edu/2017/2017.07.08](https://bmc.brynmawr.edu/2017/2017.07.08) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Pade, Marianne (2020). Canon and archive in Humanist Latin. *Nordic Journal of Renaissance Studies* 17: 11–34
- Passarotti, Marco et al. (2015). The Project. Passarotti, Marco et al., eds *The Index Thomisticus Treebank Project*, <https://itreebank.marginalia.it/view/projet.php> (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Pearse, Roger (2003). Recent discoveries of Latin texts (s. IV–VII). Pearse, Roger, ed. *The Tertullian Project*, [www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/recent\\_latin\\_finds.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/recent_latin_finds.htm) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Rabbie, Edwin (1996). Editing Neo-Latin texts. *Editio* 10: 25–48
- Ramminger, Johann (2003–). *Neulateinische Wortliste. Ein Wörterbuch des Lateinischen von Petrarca bis 1700*, [www.neulatein.de](http://www.neulatein.de) (accessed June 29, 2021)
- Ramminger, Johann (2014). Neo-Latin: Character and development. Ford, Philip, Jan Bloemendal, and Charles E. Fantazzi, eds. *Brill's Encyclopedia of the Neo-Latin World*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 21–36
- Ramminger, Johann (2020). The Latin of the German Reformation and the heritage of Quattrocento Humanism. Horster, Camilla and Marianne Pade, eds *Cultural Encounter and Identity in the Neo-Latin World*. Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 155–177
- Sacré, Dirk and Romain Jalabert (2010). Bibliographie intermédiaire des poètes et versificateurs latins en France au XIXe siècle. *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 59: 223–30
- Solberg, Per Erik (2017). *The Discourse Semantics of Long-Distance Reflexives*. PhD Thesis. Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo
- Tunberg, Terence O. (1997). Ciceronian Latin: Longolius and others. *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 46: 13–61
- Tunberg, Terence O. (2003). [Review:] Françoise Waquet. *Le latin ou l'empire d'un signe. ... Françoise Waquet. Latin or the Empire of a Sign*. Trans. John Howe ... London, New York 2001. *Renaissance Quarterly* 56: 216–219
- Turner, James (2014). *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5hhrxf>
- Verbaal, Vim (2007). The burden of the past: By way of introduction. Verbaal, Vim, Yanick Maes, and Jan Papy, eds. *Latinitas Perennis. Volume One: The Continuity of Latin Literature*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 3–13
- Wardhaugh, Ronald (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell Publishing

## *Paradoks lingvističkih istraživanja novolatinskoga. Simptomi i uzroci*

Golema većina dostupnih nam latinskih tekstova napisana je nakon srednjega vijeka. Radi se o spisima koji su veoma raznoliki, kulturno relevantni i zanimljivi za lingvistička istraživanja. Ta se činjenica, međutim, ne odražava na pažnji koju znanstvena zajednica posvećuje latinskome toga razdoblja. Istraživanja koja se njime bave niti su sustavna niti prate suvremene teorijske i metodološke dosege u lingvistici.

Na početku rada daje se definicija novolatinskoga te se količina tekstova napisanih na njemu uspoređuje s tekstovima antičkoga latiniteta. Ukazuje se na činjenicu da je ono što od neolatiniteta poznajemo više desetaka puta opsežnije od korpusa antičkih latinskih tekstova, ali i na to da neutvrđeni broj novolatinskih spisa još nije usustavljen i količinski procijenjen. Osim toga, pokazuje se da su oni višestruko brojniji i ako se promatra samo broj književnih tekstova i njihovih autora.

U nastavku se na temelju analize udjela članaka posvećenih novovjekovnim varijantama latinskoga jezika u po tri najvažnije periodičke publikacije iz područja latinske lingvistike i novolatinskih studija zaključuje da je njihova zastupljenost nesrazmjerno niska u odnosu na broj članaka koji se bave antičkim latinskim. Budući da gotovo svi lingvisti koji se bave latinskim jezikom ograničavaju svoja istraživanja na antiku i srednji vijek, većina onoga što je napisano na latinskome ostaje bez odgovarajuće znanstvene obrade.

Potom se analiziraju glavni razlozi navedenoga stanja u kontekstu suvremene jezikoslovne metodologije i povijesti klasične filologije. Zaključuje se da je marginalan položaj koji novovjekovni latinski ima u istraživanjima posljedica očuvanja stanja naslijeđenoga iz tradicije i da nije održiv na temelju valjanoga znanstvenog rasuđivanja. Slijedom toga, poziva se na potpunu i sustavnu integraciju jezičnoga proučavanja novovjekovnoga latinskoga u latinsku lingvistiku.

**Keywords:** neo-Latin, language status, Latin linguistics

**Ključne riječi:** novolatinski jezik, status jezika, latinska lingvistika