

BLOCK 2. Back to the past (1)

Unit 2.1. Language teaching before the Renaissance



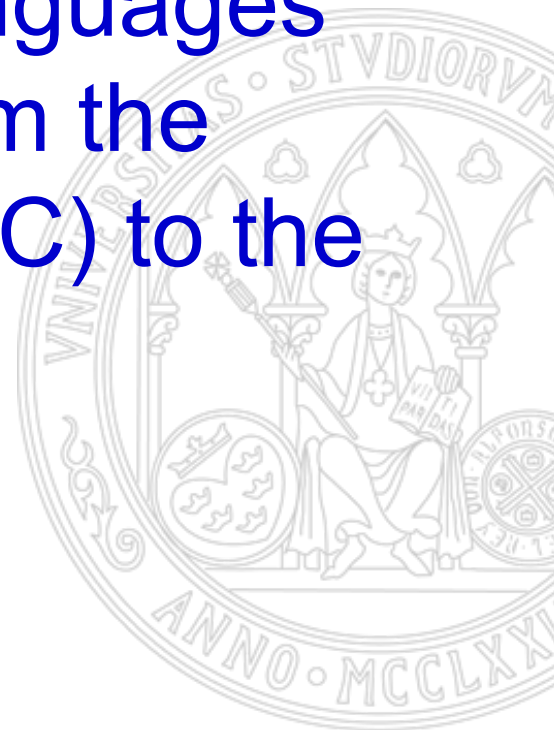
Outline

1. Objective of this unit
2. Language teaching before the Middle Ages
3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages



1. Objective of this unit

Offer an overview of how languages were taught and learned from the Sumerians (5th millennium BC) to the Middle Ages inclusive.



2. Language teaching before the Middle Ages

1. The Sumerians
2. The Egyptians
3. The Greeks
4. The Romans



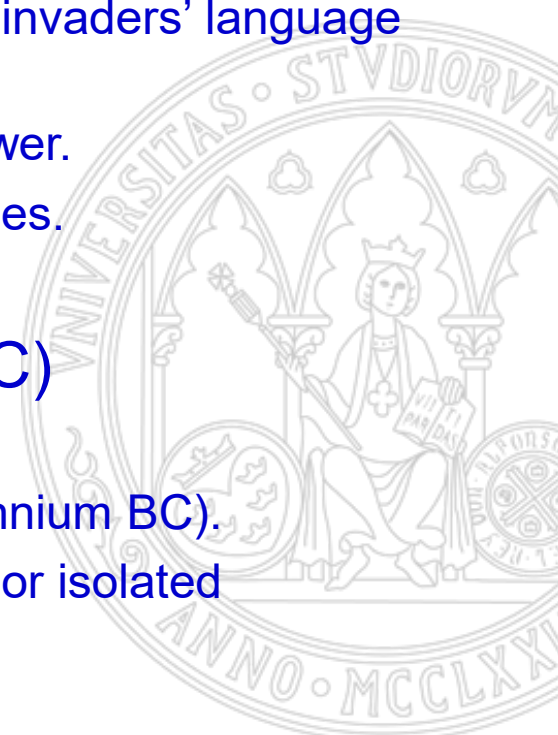
2. Language teaching before the Middle Ages

1. The Sumerians (5th-2nd millennium BC)

- Learning of Sumerian as a foreign language: Sumerian vs. Akkadians.
 - Language of the conquered (Sumerian) vs. invaders' language (Akkadian).
 - Language and culture vs. language and power.
 - Vocabulary lists prepared by Akkadian scribes.

2. The Egyptians (from the 4th millennium BC)

- Similar case to the Akkadians.
- *Amarna Archives* (multilingual tablets) (2nd millennium BC).
- Learning phrases or sayings (no grammar rules or isolated vocabulary).



2. Language teaching before the Middle Ages

3. The Greeks (7th-2nd centuries BC)

- Foreign languages or barbarian: not appreciated
- Greek model of education: Homer. Koine: language spoken by the Greek people
- Learning bilingual lists of words arranged in parallel columns

4. The Romans (1st century BC – 3rd century AD)

- Loss of Greek hegemony in favour of Latin.
- *Hermeneumata* (early 3rd century):
 - 1) Greek-Latin vocabulary, firstly alphabetically ordered, then semantically classified into *capitula* (chapters).
 - 2) A series of very simple texts (narrative or conversational character) (Titone, 1968)
- Memorisation of words and phrases. Direct and inverse translation for words, phrases and texts (Sánchez, 1997).

2. Language teaching before the Middle Ages

The paterfamilias moves toward his friend and says,

‘Good morning, Caius’, and he embraces him.

The latter returns the greeting and says,

‘Nice to meet you. Would you like to come along?’

‘Where?’

‘To see our friend Lucius. We are going to pay him a visit.’

‘What’s the matter with him?’

‘He’s sick.’

‘Since when?’

‘Since a few days ago.’

‘Where does he live?’

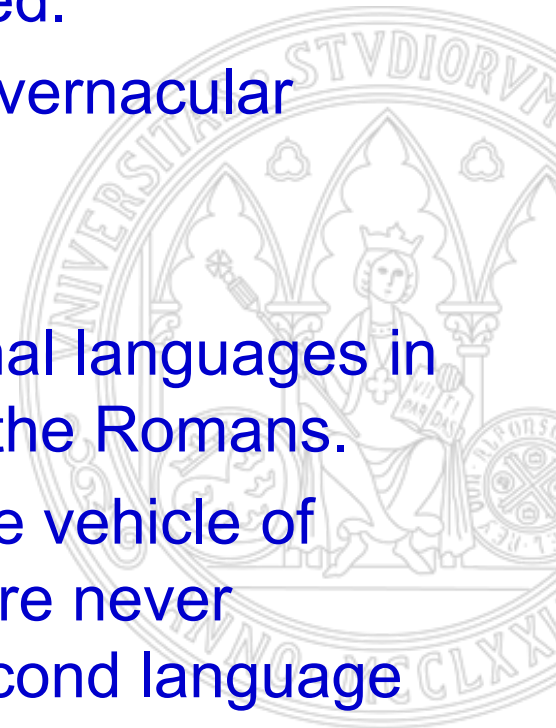
‘Not very far away from here. If you like we can go there.’

(Titone, 1968: 7)



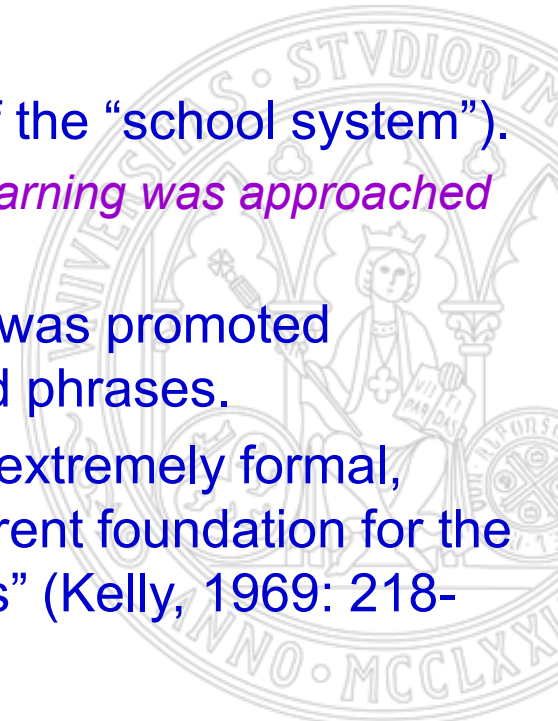
3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages

- After the fall of the Roman empire in the 5th century, Latin became the international language of daily communication, business and culture throughout Europe among the different peoples that have been Romanised.
- 7th-9th centuries (approx.): First glosses of vernacular languages in biblical texts
- 10th-15th centuries (approx.):
 - Very gradually, Latin gave way to national languages in daily life in the countries conquered by the Romans.
 - It nevertheless continued its reign as the vehicle of culture (even in those nations which were never Romanised) and thus emerged as a second language which had to be learnt.



3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages

- Two language learning contexts:
 - Informal/private contexts:
probably, tutors used direct and aural-oral techniques accompanied by small texts and some bilingual lists of vocabulary and functional phrases.
 - Formal contexts:
education was confined to monasteries (origin of the “school system”).
How do you think that Latin and foreign language learning was approached in monasteries? Why?
- Learning mostly relied on memory; consequently, it was promoted through oral practice: chorus repetition of words and phrases.
- “Though the Latin teaching of the Middle Ages was extremely formal, grammar was not really introduced until some apparent foundation for the spoken language had been laid by the song schools” (Kelly, 1969: 218-219).



3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages

LANGUAGE TEACHING INSTRUMENTS

1) Catechistic technique → question and answer...



Do you remember the predecessor of this technique?

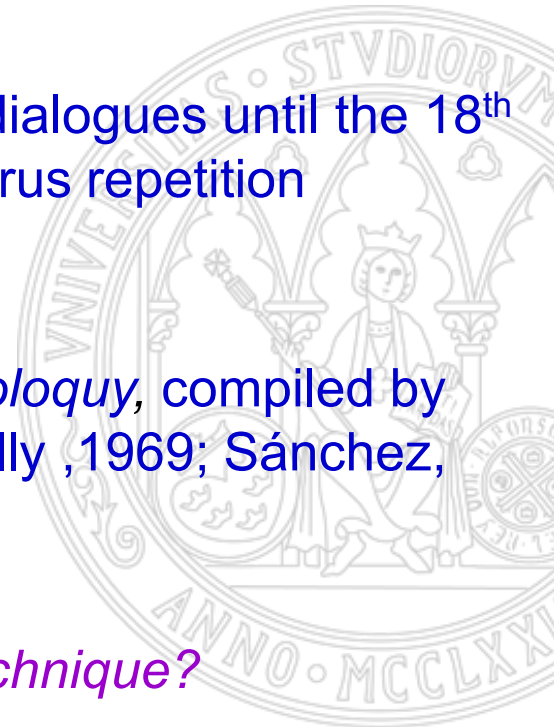
... together with *colloquia* (label of language teaching dialogues until the 18th century according to Kelly, 1969); group chant and chorus repetition

2) Glossaries

Ex. One of the best known topical glossaries was *Coloquy*, compiled by Aelfric, “the Grammarian” in 1005 (Howatt, 2004; Kelly, 1969; Sánchez, 1997)



Do you remember the predecessor of this technique?



3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages

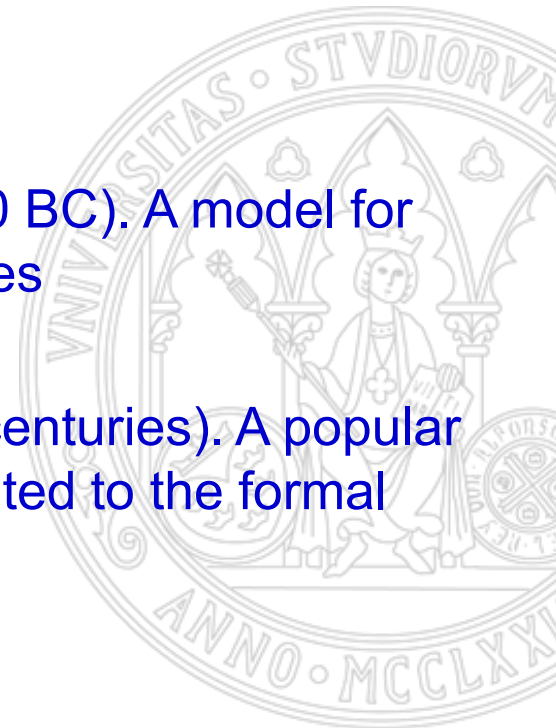
LANGUAGE TEACHING INSTRUMENTS

3) Grammars.



In which context do you think these were used?

- *Ars Grammaticae*, by Dionysius Thrax (170 BC-90 BC). A model for the grammars of Greek, Latin and vulgar languages
- *Ars Grammatica*, by Donatus (4th century)
- *Institutiones Grammaticae*, by Priscianus (6th-7th centuries). A popular grammar all throughout the Middle Ages. Contributed to the formal shaping of Latin as taken in the Renaissance.



3. Language teaching in the Middle Ages

- When national languages came into scene from the tenth and eleventh centuries onwards, they irremediably adopted the model of Latin teaching: Glossaries, texts and dialogues.



Unit 2.2

