

The Case Study of the Simulacrum in Latin Teaching

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[0000-0002-7066-0130](https://doi.org/10.3081/0002-7066-0130)

ABSTRACT — This paper presents a case study of an exercise in the Latin language used as part of assessment in Latin courses at the Universidad de Costa Rica. The exercise is an ungraded test administered one week before the graded assessment for the course, so it is a formative evaluation that works as a practice tool for the summative evaluation. The main objective is to present the Simulacrum as a learning exercise for the process of learning Latin in a university environment. A second objective concerns executive-function skills and the anxiety associated with these kinds of assessments. Neurodivergent students also play an important role in this discussion, since traditional ways of evaluating knowledge may not take account of differences in information processing. Methodologically, I chose a case-study approach to present this tool. The framework considers learning by doing, neurodidactics for neurodiversity, and inclusive instructional design. Finally, the results are evaluated using the SMART methodology and the SWOT method.

KEYWORDS — Latin, Formative, Assignment, Neurodiversity, Simulacrum

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this paper is the case study of the Latin teaching tool called ‘Simulacrum’. The Simulacrum, in short, is a formative assessment that functions as a rehearsal and diagnostic test in the context of the teaching of Latin at the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR). It was designed to be an exercise to be executed one week before the summative assessment. In this paper, I will expose the Simulacrum as a case study of the benefits that can be achieved in the process of learning Latin for neurodivergent students.

It is imperative to clarify first the way I’m using the concept of ‘case study’. I consider it important to make clear that I am using the ‘case study’ concept as the methodology that I will follow in this paper to accomplish my main objective: to present the Simulacrum as a learning tool for the process of learning Latin in a university environment. The purpose of the paper is to show an alternative resource that can be used in the design of assessments as a part of the general planning of a Latin subject at a university level. Although the main objective is to expose a resource, there is also a secondary objective based on the question of which elements can be added to the Simulacrum to improve its effectiveness as a diagnostic tool for the process of learning Latin language. To answer this question, I made a few modifications to the Simulacrum based on the comments from previous students and tested it recently in the 2026 edition of one of the Latin

courses. I will show some of the results in the fifth part of the paper; first, I will give the context of the Simulacrum, then refer to the framework used for the design of the tool, and then mention some testimonies gathered between 2023 and 2025.

It is also important to comment on the role of the neurodiversity factor in the design of this tool. The Simulacrum was originally a general resource for all the students that I had each year in the Latin courses. However, after learning in 2023 that a significant number of students had neurodivergent diagnoses, I began to focus my attention on how I could make this tool helpful for them. The neurodivergent diagnoses that were considered are autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. Even though the aim is focused on this population, the exercise can be useful for Latin students more generally in an academic environment. The Simulacrum is not intended to exclude the general student population; rather, it is a resource that can have particular significance for neurodivergent students based on their characteristics and needs. So, this tool is intended to make an important contribution to the inclusive learning of the Latin language.

2. THE CONTEXT

The origin of the topic of this paper is the situation of anxiety and preparation for assessments that the students face in the learning process of the Latin language. Back in 2019, the idea of preparing a practice test before the real one came to my mind. I was curious to see if this action could help students to be better prepared for a traditional written test in which they respond on paper to instructions concerning sentences or a brief text. The task mainly requires a morphological analysis of sentences followed by their translation. The students had to study the grammar and the vocabulary based on the teacher's previous explanations, together with the exercises completed in class and for homework. During the test, they could only use a Latin-Spanish dictionary as a help tool, nothing else. I realised that some of them experienced anxiety and fear before doing the test, even those who attended lessons regularly and had completed all the previous assignments responsibly.

Inspired by one of the survey questions in an evaluation of teaching performance at UCR, and Article 18 of the *Reglamento de Régimen Académico Estudiantil*¹, I decided to design a previous version of the test that was very similar in the instructions and the structure of the tasks. The question of the survey was, indeed, if the teacher, before a test, had previously practised the content with the students in other assignments. At that moment, I understood that the point was not to introduce a task for the first time in a test. It was necessary to do at least one rehearsal or exercise before it. Hoping for a good result without knowing the task was very difficult.

¹ It specifies the requirement to practise the course content with students before a summative assessment.

In addition, there was another factor: the test environment. I assigned exercises before the test, and these were the traditional method of doing the morphological analysis and then the translation of the Latin sentences to Spanish. Even if I request the students to do the same in the test, the factor that made a difference was that they did these exercises in the classroom or at home, but not in an actual test environment. To be more accurate, they did not feel the pressure of doing these tasks on an ordinary day of classes compared with the day of the test. The reason behind that perception is that the whole class session was devoted to the test, and there is a traditional protocol to follow, and the characteristic silence in the room because, since it is an individual assessment, they cannot talk with each other. They know they are by themselves, and this is the moment to determine how much they have learned of the content being assessed. This circumstance placed them in a different situation.

Based on that context, I came up with the idea of a formative assignment that I call 'Simulacrum' in the context of the Latin courses that I teach at UCR. These subjects are four courses of Latin, two at basic level and two at intermediate level. The Simulacrum started in the course *Latín Básico I* and then appeared in the following courses, called *Latín Básico II*, *Latín Intermedio I*, and *Latín Intermedio II*. The name was inspired by the Latin noun '*simulacrum*' and, as I mentioned before, it was conceived to accomplish one of the parameters used to evaluate teaching performance. So, thinking of a Latin noun, the name matched with the objective of providing at least one practice or demonstration of how to solve an exercise before doing the summative assessment.

2.1. THE LATIN TEACHING METHODOLOGY

In a case study of an exercise for testing the acquisition of Latin, it is important to have a reference to the traditional methods employed for this goal. For the present case study, the main reference is the grammar translation method. The reason is that in the contents of the four courses mentioned, there is no objective of practising at a conversational level. The communicative method is employed in another course called "*Latín Conversacional*", when the main aim is to be able to produce Latin sentences and expressions orally and in writing. Since I took this other course when I was a student, and comparing the different dynamics involved, I decided that the grammar translation method must be the basis for the Simulacrum.

The grammar translation method is usually known to be the 'traditional method'. This perception is based on the belief that studying Latin grammar and then doing a translation of a text in Latin are the most common activities to do. However, this is a pragmatic purpose: throughout history the student of Latin needs to understand the Latin grammar very well in order to be able to recognise it in a Latin text and then comprehend it. If the main goal is to comprehend the text that is originally written in Latin or to do a translation into another language, in

both scenarios it is necessary to have a good declarative knowledge. The activity of translation tends to be a more procedural knowledge that involves two languages, and this requires a lot of practice to achieve accuracy.

However, there is also another method of teaching Latin that is perceived to be more “modern”. This is sometimes called ‘modern methodology’ and is based on the communicative approach to the teaching of Latin. This approach is called ‘communicative method’ because it “emphasizes active language use through dialogues and oral exercises” (Maxmurova, 2025, p. 727). This communicative method focuses on the conversational level, believing that to learn Latin, it is necessary to practise in this language without employing another one. That’s why some teachers also perceive this method to be more natural.

Much more could be said about these and other methodologies. However, this is not the space for it since the main objective is to show the results of the Simulacrum. In order to at least give some context, and based on what was mentioned, it is important to summarise that the Simulacrum was initially based on the grammar-translation method. The reason for it was an academic and didactic one. Students in the Latin courses are usually between 18 and 23 years old, and most begin the first basic-level course in their first year at university. Since we already notice certain levels of anxiety and worry among students about taking a test in which they can use a dictionary as a resource and having a piece of paper with the instructions on it, taking an oral test without this tool and without written instructions to consult seems more difficult and likely to increase students’ concern.

The same can be said if the test is a written communicative one, because even if they can have the piece of paper with the instructions, they will need to write in Latin, and this requires a higher level of both declarative and procedural knowledge. From my perspective, this type of task can be useful at higher levels of Latin but not at the basic levels, when it is necessary to gain confidence by recognising words and their uses. Expecting production from a student in the first levels can be problematic and not recommended for the first stage.

2.2. THE NEURODIVERSITY FACTOR

In the process of acquiring languages, the neurodiversity factor can easily be overlooked. By ‘neurodiversity factor’, I mean consideration of the neurodivergent population when planning a lesson. ‘Neurodivergence’ is defined as “a range of cognitive differences, including dyslexia and autism, which can affect how the students process information, connect with people and adapt to new learning environments” (Calzada et al., 2025, p. 16). The teaching task involves different factors, but this one is not always taken into account. To achieve more inclusive education and offer tools that provide more equal opportunities to learn without making two different groups in the same classroom, the circumstances of

neurodivergent students have to be considered. This does not require changing everything or undertaking a complete transformation; small actions can be enough like preparing an instrument that can help them to reduce their difficulties, which usually are more emotional because of the traditional environment of a test.

The number of neurodivergent students in classrooms is increasing. A significant number of people may meet criteria associated with neurodivergence but remain undiagnosed. It is very common nowadays to hear that someone close to us has received a late diagnosis in adulthood. If these circumstances are considered in the planning of the lessons, it could help a larger number of people in the future. In some cases, the teachers will know about the diagnosis of certain students, but some students may remain undiagnosed and can still benefit from this inclusive planning.

Regarding the Latin language learning and teaching process, many of the difficulties are related to executive-function skills and not necessarily to the content of the Latin grammar. Of course, Latin, as an ancient language, has a different structure, and it recreates the '*imago mundi*' of the Roman world in different stages that can make the context of some texts challenging during the first months. However, similar circumstances also arise with modern languages. Students with diagnoses of autism, ADHD, or dyslexia can experience difficulties during a test that are more closely related to executive functioning than to declarative knowledge. "The traditional learning environment can be overwhelming and anxiety-provoking for neurodiverse learners who struggle to keep up with the pace or fit into the rigid expectations of the system" (Nwachukwu et al., 2024, p. 1007). For example, autistic students, although the classroom is silent, can experience a meltdown or shutdown when surrounded by many people; students with ADHD may experience anxiety about sitting for several hours without getting up; students with dyslexia can confuse some letters, even if they know the spelling of the words.

Executive-function challenges lie beyond the Latin language itself. Neurodivergent students can have strong declarative knowledge in general terms, but they can be confused or disturbed by the experience of being evaluated in front of many people, even if the evaluation is not oral. These students "struggle with executive functioning skills such as planning and organization" (Calzada et al., 2025, p. 16). For this population, knowing in advance what will be evaluated and how can make a big difference.

The Latin grammar is flexible and requires memorising or at least recognising some key endings in the words, and the two processes of how the words are created in Latin: composition and derivation. Since Latin is an inflected language, the student needs to understand very well that there are many changes in how the same word can function because, for example, the morphemes at the endings of the

nouns and adjectives that reflect the cases, or the morphemes in the middle of a verb that show the time and mood, such as the *-ba-* for the Imperfect.

3. THE ASSIGNMENT

The name of this assessment is “Simulacrum” because it is conceived to be very similar to the real one, regarding the instructions and the structure of the test. The design of the evaluation is intended to support both neurotypical and neurodivergent students in terms of anxiety and emotional preparation for a test. The original was conceived without specific consideration of neurodivergent students because I was not aware of this condition back in 2019 when the first Simulacrum was used. At that moment, the assignment was planned to help the whole classroom, and it is still considered in that way. The change is that after 2023, when I began to learn more about neurodiversity and some students recorded their diagnoses in their course files, I reinforced the tool to be clearer in its instructions and to consider the specific circumstances that a neurodivergent student may make errors, become confused, or be disturbed by, such as giving them many instructions, evaluating content for the first time or in a new task, and the time frame.

Regarding the problem or issue, I noticed that the students were very anxious about the test. This was mainly because they did not know what the structure and instructions would be. In response to this situation, the main goal was to give them the chance to take a very similar test with the same instructions and structure one week before. This was planned to help them because after doing the Simulacrum, they could reflect on how they felt and prepare better for the assessment, already knowing which areas require more attention. The decisive requirement for the assignment to be a useful tool is to be very similar to the real test and to cover the same topics that were previously announced to them.

In brief, the Simulacrum is developed as a rehearsal test for an upcoming summative assessment. It is important to understand that it is a formative evaluation that serves as an exercise that gathers information about the personal acquisition of declarative and procedural knowledge regarding the Latin language. The main premise is that there should be a close relationship between formative and summative assessments. The core element is to be very similar to the real one in contents, instructions, and time frame. For example, for autistic students, it can support procedural knowledge of how to identify grammatical features and translate into Spanish while reducing feelings of overwhelm; for students with ADHD, it can support time management and sustained focus; and for students with dyslexia, it can support reading fluency through clear and concise instructions. In addition, it is designed to improve accuracy in declarative knowledge, provide experience through practice, and reduce anxiety. These three elements are considered together because I think they can be a tool to assist the students in two

main areas: knowledge of Latin grammar and vocabulary; and the emotional experience of taking a test.

Currently, the Simulacrum works well and, based on the student testimonies, is helpful for its purpose. Nevertheless, I consider that there is scope to gain further insight and to add more elements that can improve its effectiveness. From this point of view, I formulated the question of which elements can be added to the Simulacrum to improve its effectiveness as a diagnostic tool for the process of learning the Latin language while maintaining a focus on neurodivergent students. To answer this inquiry, I plan to gather more information from the current students by asking them about the benefits of doing formative assessments before a summative one, and to add features designed to help neurodivergent students feel more at ease in a safe environment and with a clearer understanding of the task they are required to complete.

3.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this case study is built from three pedagogical approaches: learning by doing, neurodidactics for neurodiversity, and inclusive instructional design. These three methods work together to offer an exercise that achieves the objective of exposing the student to the most realistic scenario of a summative assessment in the traditional format of a test through practical rehearsal of the evaluation of the acquisition of declarative and procedural knowledge for the Latin language.

John Dewey's learning-by-doing method is the fundamental principle for the Simulacrum. As the author mentioned, when the human being experiences something, "we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences" (Dewey, 1916, p. 104). The result is a highly personal basis for reflecting on the experience. The consequences can be a critical factor when the student understands what the task is and the implications of it. This personal reflection is pivotal for the acquisition of knowledge and acts as a preliminary diagnosis of the learning process. So, as it is usually defined, the learning by doing method is "learning from experiences resulting directly from one's own actions, as contrasted with learning from watching others perform" (Reese, 2011, p. 1). As I said before, my aim is for students to experience taking a very similar test to the official one. The best way to accomplish this is by asking them to undertake a trial run of the summative assessment in a formative mode.

I ensured that each student had the experience of doing the exercise. Hearing someone else describe an experience is not the same as having a personal one. The learning by doing method requires individual participation because "people learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience" (Ord, 2012, p. 55). From this perspective, the Simulacrum is designed exclusively to be an individual assignment. In my methodology, the students can talk to one another in

other assignments and during lessons everyone participates in a collaborative dynamic, but this particular exercise has to be done alone because the outcome is to identify the areas to reinforce for the summative test and not all the students will have the same difficulties and the same reactions to those difficulties during the exercise.

I chose this approach because of its direct relationship with the principle of repetition. The personal experience needs repetition, because “when learning is based on experience, it is characterized by continuity and interaction” (Achkovska Leshkovska and Miovska Spaseva, 2016, p. 59). I believe that in learning a language, it is necessary to practise every day, and repeated activities such as studying the grammar in the textbook and then in the Latin text can be decisive. That continuity and interaction can make the difference. Also, the benefit of the translation requirement is to help the decision-making process when a student needs to choose between the meanings of words and their functions according to the syntax involved. In the learning by doing method, this repetition and exposure to context help to develop accuracy, and it is also related to another principle of the method: trial and error.

Ord (2012) refers to Kolb’s (1984, p. 21) four-stage model of learning by experience. This model consists of a concrete experience that leads to a second stage of observations and reflections, followed by a third stage involving the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations, until it reaches the testing of implications of concepts in new situations. These phases are covered by the Simulacrum: first, the student has a concrete experience of doing the assignment within the allotted time frame, then moves to reflection, or a *‘post mortem’* on how they felt and what observations can be made about their personal performance. After a few days, the student forms concepts and generalisations of the procedural knowledge and can plan a better way to do the test in the new situation of the summative test. As Ord (2012, p. 57) summarises, this cycle can be expressed simply as the steps ‘do, review, plan’.

The Simulacrum is designed with reference to another approach: the neurodidactics for neurodiversity. This approach is significant for my methodology because I typically have, on average, between five and ten neurodivergent students in each course. Neurodiversity is significant because “consequently, conventional or traditional teaching methods may not adequately support these learners, necessitating the implementation of adaptable teaching strategies and activities to foster inclusivity and support” (Calzada et al., 2025, p. 16). The neurodidactics approach encourages consideration of brain structure and function. It is an inclusive approach because different cognitive profiles are represented in the same classroom. If this area is considered in the Latin language learning process, the students would benefit from the fact that there are different perspectives to explain something.

A third approach is the inclusive instructional design. This approach aims to highlight the strengths of learners with additional needs, including neurodivergent students. Nwachukwu et al. (2024, p. 1004) explain that social and communication differences among neurodivergent students can make social interaction and learning challenging because they can affect their ability to focus and participate in classroom activities. Planning lessons with different activities can be helpful for neurodivergent students if consideration is given to which activities they can undertake without creating an anxiety-provoking environment. It is important to think about and prioritise the needs of the students since they are the ones involved directly in the learning process. For example, there can be alternatives for completing exercises in a quieter setting for autistic students, such as allowing them to listen to music through headphones, and alternatives involving more movement for students with ADHD.

The importance of these approaches is that they can work together to achieve inclusive learning. Based on the different populations represented in a classroom, the Simulacrum fits well with the needs of different groups of students. This strength can help students gain confidence in the learning process because “it is a natural variation in brain function, not a deficit” (Nwachukwu et al., 2024, p. 1004). So, by designing a test for the whole classroom, it becomes an inclusive exercise that all the students can participate in at the same time and under the same conditions. This is part of the inclusive instructional design because it “refers to all efforts aimed at achieving inclusion in the classroom by tailoring instruction to meet learners’ needs” (Nwachukwu et al., 2024, p. 1004).

3.2. THE PREDICTED BENEFITS FOR NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS

There are some benefits that I anticipate for neurodivergent students regarding the Simulacrum. One of these is the opportunity for prior trial and error. This can be achieved by “creating an accessible, engaging, and supportive learning environment” (Nwachukwu et al., 2024, p. 1004). The students knew in previous versions of the Simulacrum that this was an exercise in which they could make mistakes without negative consequences because it was designed to be a diagnostic of the acquisition of content. Also, they can benefit from knowing their mistakes, since these show which areas they need to reinforce because “emphasizing strengths without adequately addressing weakness could lead to a neglect of necessary support mechanisms” (Bailey & Petty, 2025, p. 20). Indeed, the Simulacrum is predicted to reveal which areas require more focus or time to study.

It was necessary to give them at least one week to reinforce the weak points they identified. They also needed to be aware of the stressful situations they could face. Certainly, it requires flexibility at the beginning to understand how the students perceive the acquisition of the content by doing this type of exercise. For this purpose, the evaluation must be short and with clear instructions to follow. If

this happens, the predicted benefits for neurodivergent students will be greater confidence and better access to declarative and procedural knowledge.

4. TESTIMONIES BEFORE 2026

I gathered testimonies from the 2023–2025 versions of the Simulacra. In these versions, there were only four tasks to achieve: analysis of morphology, analysis of syntax, translation from Latin to Spanish, and identification of grammatical elements. It was designed to support declarative knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, as well as procedural knowledge through dictionary use and the steps required to translate an original Latin sentence into Spanish. I told the students about the case study, and they provided me with these testimonies.

I will call “Aemilia” the student of the first testimony. She was very active with the assessments and earned good grades in Latin. Aemilia did 12 Simulacra between 2023 and 2025, and her trouble was not the Latin grammar, it was the emotional anxiety and the fear of dealing with something that she had not practised. Aemilia mentioned: “An important tool to prepare ourselves emotionally prior to the exam, since it gives a clearer picture of how to feel about the real evaluation”. Aemilia mentions the emotional factor and the importance of having an idea of how they could feel in the real test. She adds: “I think it is important that these types of exercises are carried out in language and linguistics courses to be more familiar with what has been learned and its application in practice”. In this second quote, Aemilia highlights the familiarity factor: dealing with something students already know how to do, which is where practice becomes particularly relevant. If students do not have a similar prior experience, they can be affected by their emotions.

The second student will be “Fulvia”, a neurotypical student. She expressed an interest in giving feedback about the Simulacrum. Her opinion was that “on a psychological level, they helped me with stress management and time management”. These elements are part of the executive-function skills discussed above. Coming from a neurotypical student, this is a sign of the significance of the tool because a neurotypical student also benefited from doing the Simulacrum. Fulvia also remarked that “many students are unaware of a neurodiversity diagnosis” and she suggested using pictograms in future versions of the Simulacrum because “pictograms promote the understanding of neurodivergent people”. This was a particularly interesting suggestion.

The third case is “Marcia”, a student with no official diagnosis of autism but with some traits associated with it; at the time of the course, she was waiting for the appointment to confirm the diagnosis. Her testimony is important regarding the expectation for the real test: “The Simulacra in class were particularly useful to me because they allowed me to better understand what to expect in the real exam with the type of exercises, the pace, and, above all, the time pressure”. She mentioned an

important factor concerning the Simulacra II and III of each course; these were designed to be home drills because of the lack of lessons in the schedule. It was not possible to do the three Simulacra of each course in the classroom. Marcia said: "The home drills did not feel equally important, although they served as practice, the absence of a controlled environment meant that I took them more calmly and without the feeling of being in an authentic evaluation situation". Based on this testimony, I decided to pause the home version of the Simulacrum and focus more on the classroom version because this is the original version and the one that makes the greatest difference. Other students have told me that being at home does not feel the same, the environment changes, and they have more distractions.

The fourth case is "Cornelia", a student with autism and ADHD. She completed the Simulacrum at the basic level and said: "What I considered Professor Altamirano's most anti-stress dynamic was the 'Rehearsal Test'. The dynamic was that the week before the test, he would give us a mock test that was structured the same way as the real test would be". Cornelia notes that I aim to make the Simulacrum more difficult than the real test: "At the same, we also knew that the 'Rehearsal Test' tended to be more difficult than the real test, so that if you actually prepared for it and respond it with honesty, you could have a very good idea of how you would do in the real test and in which are you should reinforce, having a whole week for you to do exactly that". This strategy tends to develop greater confidence in the students because they first train with the harder challenge and in a formative way. If they did a good job in the Simulacrum, the test will be easier.

The insights from previous Simulacra have shown positive results based on the comments of the students. In some way, the Simulacrum is a drill, rehearsal test, or diagnostic test whose aim is to show each student which areas they need to bolster. One of the main observations concerns the psychological atmosphere because it reduces anxiety and decreases the confusion that can appear in the real test, since they already know how the test will be. An elemental point in this matter is to give them the instructions in advance. This action helps neurodivergent students to understand more accurately what is required of them and to avoid mistakes in the comprehension of the texts or sentences included.

It is important to add that they can ask questions as in the summative assessment. These questions can save them time the following week because they will face something very similar. The design of the Simulacrum is to be a formative assessment that strengthens the engagement of the students with the content by providing a more relaxed way of preparing for the summative assessment. Also, it works as a monitoring or diagnostic tool that encourages them to take greater responsibility for their own learning by finding solutions to the mistakes they make.

5. RESULTS OF THE 2026 VERSION

The 2026 version of the Simulacrum is the first to introduce reading comprehension as a fifth task. It is important to clarify that the design is also intended to avoid making the test too long. Because it is important to provide a text containing the main grammatical elements listed for assessment, the selected text contains relatively few complex sentences. So, this 2026 version adds reading comprehension. However, for the 2026 version, the aim was to go further and include reading comprehension in Latin. So, it is necessary to mention that the Simulacrum could also evolve into a reading comprehension assessment and a communicative assessment via conversation. We are talking about at least three different types of the Simulacrum: the traditional one, focused on the analysis and translation of the text; a second one for reading comprehension; and a third one for communication in Latin through oral and written tasks. Nevertheless, for the 2026 version, only the reading comprehension task was added. The communicative type of Simulacrum would be better tested in a conversational course.

I will refer to five cases related to the Simulacrum of the first course of the intermediate level. The results will be evaluated by applying the SMART methodology: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Then I will consider the possibility of improving the tool based on the SWOT methodology: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. First, the insights of the students.

The Simulacrum lasted 2 hours and 15 minutes. Student A was the first to finish, 25 minutes after the beginning of the assignment, and she said that the assessment helped her to realise that she needed to learn more vocabulary. Student B finished at 49 minutes and said the main difficulty for him was the translation part. Student C spent almost an hour and said he needed to study more deponent verbs. Student D spent 1 hour and 40 minutes and said she discovered that she remembered vocabulary she had not specifically studied for the test simply by completing the previous practice exercises. Finally, Student E realised the need to have a method for the test, so he decided to spend some minutes working on this method and use it the following week in the real test, the summative assessment.

If we apply the SMART methodology to the Simulacrum, the result is favourable. The goals are specific and clear for the teacher and the students; they understand their purpose; also, these goals are achievable and realistic because they will use the same instrument, the dictionary, as an aid. Regarding measurability, each of the students can measure their own progress after doing the assignment and checking their answers because they retain the sheet of instructions and the text. Regarding relevance, the objective is related to the long-term goal of acquiring more knowledge of how the Latin language functions. Finally, the time-bound criterion is also realistic because it is the same for the formative and the summative assessment.

As a result, the SWOT analysis produces the following observations. First, one threat is that students may become bored with the Simulacrum and believe it is no longer necessary once they lose their fear; however, if this happens, the goal is achieved because one of its aims is precisely to build confidence and a sense of control. So, we can say it gives students a sense that they are better prepared for the next assessment. Second, based on what they said days later, one weakness is the context of numerous assignments for other courses and the economic circumstances affecting some students, given that these are reasons why they did not show up to do the Simulacrum. Third, one strength is the assignment itself because the option of having an exercise designed to test their progress is a personal instrument designed for a specific course and a list of contents. Finally, opportunities are related to the teacher's job of implementing new features or types of tasks that match the goals of the course programme and applying it to the Simulacrum. As an example, for the next Simulacrum at the basic level of Latin, there will be some pictograms to help the students with the context of the text.

6. CONCLUSION

Since the Simulacrum is currently used in my approach to teaching Latin, I chose the case study method to present the Simulacrum. It is conceived as a descriptive case study of an assignment developed for the philology students (Classics and Spanish) to accomplish two main goals: one, to test their procedural and declarative knowledge of the contents; two, to reduce the anxiety that usually appears in the traditional format of the test.

The main conclusion is that the Latin learning process requires a flexible approach. It is not convenient to have high expectations for the student's process of acquiring knowledge if they do not have the appropriate resources to practice. The key factor is to use learning by doing as the basis for acquiring knowledge, both declarative and procedural. The matter is more about the how than the what. Repetition can increase expertise because the repetition of a procedure is essential for understanding a language. Having a practice very close to the summative test can help students recognise the importance of testing their abilities because it shows them which areas are their own strengths and weaknesses.

Another conclusion is that when students have completed at least two or three Simulacra, they are more likely to have greater confidence in their skills. As a result, they may skip doing the assignment. However, this circumstance is different if the student is in one of my courses for the first time because they tend to complete the Simulacrum so they can have at least one experience of being in the scenario of the summative assessment. It is also very important to add some practical conclusions they reach from doing the exercise, such as having a blank sheet for drafting, or taking notes, or writing some morphemes of declensions.

I would also like to address the concept of the 'hidden curriculum'. Alsubaie (2015, p. 125) defines this concept in terms of the life lessons and virtues that students learn that are not intended, such as implicit values, behaviours, procedures, and norms. Although the hidden curriculum is not part of the content of the course, it is a factor to be considered because it provides a learning experience not only for neurodivergent students. The whole classroom can benefit from the hidden curriculum, and the Simulacrum also works for this aim. Sulaimani and Gut (2019, p. 35) comment that "because hidden curriculum is contextually and culturally specific, aspects of it can vary across settings and communities". This idea opens an opportunity to test this tool in other environments or countries. As a recommendation, it would be interesting to gather information from different parts of the world to discover if the context of one community may differ from another. It is my conjecture that in different parts of the world we can get the same conclusion: the challenge is not about the Latin grammar; the real challenge is how we teach and test knowledge of it. The debate should not be about a traditional or modern method, but instead on a more human concern regarding the emotional implications of assessment and the need to consider the neurodidactics involved.

Finally, autistic students, students with ADHD, and students with dyslexia can benefit from that concern. If the teacher and the institution develop a supportive environment for designing their assessments with a similar structure, both formative and summative, the benefit is more than just the knowledge about the subject; it is the acquisition of skills that are useful for different disciplines as well. The role of the teacher is significant because "fostering an inclusive atmosphere requires educators to remain committed to ongoing professional development" (Calzada et al., 2025, p. 16). An inclusive atmosphere can be achieved by suggesting different types of exercises and dynamics, but these need to be designed for a community that shows variation in how people think and receive information.

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