

McFETRIDGE CHAPTER 8: THE LATIN VERB

Because Latin made heavy use of inflection, a single word form could contain a lot of information. For example ...

I love = **amō**

— That one little three letter word is first person singular, present tense, indicative mood, active voice.

I loved = **amāvī**

— first person singular, past tense, perfect aspect, indicative mood, active voice

I was loving = **amābam**

— first person singular, past tense, imperfect aspect, indicative mood, active voice

I will love = **amābō**

first person singular, future tense, indicative mood, active voice

past (perfect) participle = **amātus**

present participle = **amantus**

Brief grammar review:

Number refers to first, second, third person in singular and plural. First person singular is “I”, second person singular & plural is “you”, first person plural is “we” ...

Mood refers to the speaker’s attitude toward the action predicated of the verb. **Indicative** mood is for ordinary statements of fact.

Subjunctive mood is for suppositions or statements of possibility. We still have a tiny bit of this in CE, e.g., “If I were rich, I’d have you beaten up!”

Grammar review continued ...

Voice. Two kinds: **active**, in which the grammatical subject is usually the agent or doer of some action, e.g., “I demolished your ugly Lexus”, or **passive**, in which the direct object is “promoted” and the grammatical subject “demoted”, e.g., “Your ugly Lexus was demolished (by someone).”

Tense. Your textbook, unfortunately, distorts this important concept. Note this: tense is simply a grammatical tool that may or may not have any relationship to actual real-world time. For example, I can use present tense to talk about the past:

“So last night I hear these punks outside my house ...”

... or the future:

“I leave for the asylum tomorrow.”

More about this in lecture ...

Aspect, very broadly, refers to whether or not the action predicated by the verb is complete (**perfective aspect**) or ongoing (**imperfective aspect** or, more commonly, **progressive aspect**).

Latin verb structure

Looks complicated, but it's really quite regular most of the time. Consider first these **infinitive** forms of several Latin words:

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| amāre to love | monēre to warn | regere to rule | audire to hear |
| creāre to create | credere to believe | legere to read | finire to finish |

You'll notice that the segment preceding the "-re" ending is always one of four particular vowels.

- these are **thematic** vowels; a thematic vowel identifies the **conjugation** that a verb belongs to
- the "-re" is the **infinitive** ending
- the first element in each of the words is the **root**

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| am + ā + re to love | mon + ē + re to warn | reg + e + re to rule | aud + ī + re to hear |
| cre + ā + re to create | cred + ē + re to believe | leg + e + re to read | fin + ī + re to finish |

English didn't borrow this inflectional stuff, BUT, derivational rules applied to both the thematic stem and other forms built on the thematic stem.

So we need a rule to give us the thematic stem:

$$[\text{Stem}_{\text{theme}} \Rightarrow \text{Root} + \text{V}_{\text{theme}}]_{\text{Latin}}$$

However, we can't ignore the fact that it's possible to form words off the root alone. For example, consider these **root borrowings**:

| root | verb | gloss | borrowing |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| doc | docere | to teach | docile |
| fac | facere | to make | faculty |
| am | amāre | to love | amorous |
| prob | probāre | to test | probe |
| frig | frigere | be cold | frigid |
| put | putāre | to reckon | compute |

So much for lexemes formed off the root. Latin has other rules for building lexemes from the **past participle stem** (also called in your text the “past perfect participle” or PPP). We turn to this now.

To our earlier rule:

$$[\text{Stem}_{\text{theme}} \Rightarrow \text{Root} + \text{V}_{\text{theme}}]_{\text{Latin}}$$

we now add another that builds on it; we add the participial “t”:

$$[\text{Stem}_{\text{PPP}} \Rightarrow \text{Stem}_{\text{theme}} + \text{t}]_{\text{Latin}}$$

We can see the two rules at work in the following table:

| Stem _{theme} | Stem _{PPP} |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| probable | probate |
| probabilistic | probation |
| probability | probationary |

Armed with the foregoing, we can now consider a broader range of Latin roots, construct their stems, and see what English has borrowed or built off the stems and the original roots.

| root | root borrowing | thematic stem borrowing | past participial stem borrowing |
|------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| cre | | | create |
| aud | hear | audible | audition |
| spir | inspire | | inspiration |
| greg | | gregarious | congregation |
| voc | vocal | vocable | vocation |
| fin | final | | finite |

So far all of this is pretty regular.

— but we know that morphology often creates situations that phonology has to clean up.

If we look at some **ē theme borrowings** you'll see what I mean:

| root | root borrowing | thematic stem borrowing | past participial stem borrowing |
|------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| mon | monument | | monitor |
| cred | | credence | credit |
| hab | | habilitate | habit |
| deb | | | debit |
| fug | refuge | | fugitive |

You can see that the thematic vowel 'ē' changes to 'i' in derivations, particularly those from the past participle. So we invoke a phonological rule to acknowledge this:

$$[+ \bar{e} + t \rightarrow i + t]_{\text{Latin}}$$

There is also change when we exam **e-theme** verbs and borrowings.

| root | root borrowing | thematic stem borrowing | past participial stem borrowing |
|------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| fac | facile | efficient | fact |
| doc | docile | | doctor |
| dic | | | diction |
| spec | specimen | | spectator |
| rup | | | rupture |

here are some more ...

| root | root borrowing | thematic stem borrowing | past participial stem borrowing |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| reg = rule | regular | regent | correct |
| leg = read | college | legend | collect |
| ag = drive | agile | agent | act |
| frag = break | fragile | | fracture |
| fig = mold | figure | | fiction |
| pig = paint | pigment | | picture |

You should be able to see at least a couple of pretty significant changes as you scan through the derivations:

- (i) the thematic vowel deletes in the past participle borrowings
- (ii) roots that end in “g” surface as “c” in the past participle borrowings

We'll leave it there for today.

For our next class, finish reading Chapter 8 of your text for sure. Read ahead into Chapter 9 if you have time.