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Evolution of Direct Discourse Marking from Classical to Late Latin. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

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Abstract

This book examines changes in direct discourse marking from classical to late Latin – from the 1st century BCE to the 8th century CE. The research was conducted on a sample of prosaic (mainly narrative) texts from the *Brepolis* database. Then, the texts were divided into four periods to better grasp the development of marking practices. The results show a persistent strong preference for verbal markers but changes in the frequency of individual markers. In addition, the late Latin texts tended to place markers before the beginning of a quotation, whereas classical Latin texts put them frequently in the middle of quotations. A typical feature of late Latin marking was greater diversity and differences among individual authors. This fact is likely to be the result of various factors.

Commentary

Latin direct discourse has received much less attention than has indirect discourse, which, known as *oratio obliqua*, is an essential feature of many Latin prosaic texts. This book tries to fill this gap in two aspects:

1. It tries to define direct discourse in contrast to not only indirect and free indirect discourse but also structures similar to direct discourse in some aspects.
2. It provides an overview of the development of direct discourse marking in prosaic (mostly narrative) texts from classical to late Latin.

The delimitation of direct discourse is based on theoretical studies carried out on other languages, especially English. In addition to widespread typologies of reported speech, it adopts concepts such as mixed (or hybrid) quotations and pure quotations, also called mentions. Mixed quotations are "word-for-word" quotations incorporated smoothly into the semantic and syntactic structure of the sentence, a typical example being "X said that '(a quote)'" or "'(a quote)', as X says". Pure quotations are often comments on expressions used, such as "'Dog' has three letters" or "The Romans used to say 'salve' in greetings". Similarly, the book comments on structures with the first person 'I say', which may or may not be instances of direct discourse. In contrast to modern languages, Latin did not have quotation marks, which sometimes makes disambiguation more difficult. The use of these punctuation marks in modern editions of Latin texts is up to the editor and his or her interpretation of individual passages.

Some means for direct discourse marking have already been examined on the level of individual verbs and texts. The book adds a diachronic point of view on the development over nine centuries. The main focus is on verbal markers, which are the most frequent, but attention is also paid to other marking strategies, including so-called zero marking, i.e., quotations without any explicit introductory sign of direct discourse. This approach allows us to understand better how Latin authors worked with direct discourse and integrated it into their texts.

The development of direct discourse marking is studied through various parameters. The first is the frequency of a given marker over time. Other characteristics under consideration are:

- the position of a marker vis-a-vis a quotation (before a quotation – ante-position, in the middle of a quotation – interposition, after a quotation – postposition);
- the explicit mention of an addressee;
- the adjacency of a marker to a quotation (how many expressions separate them and what type they are);
- the use of cataphoric/anaphoric pronouns;
- the preference of a marker for dialogues or monologues; and
- the use of a marker in multiple marking structures (if two or more markers introduce the same quotation, what markers combine to fulfil this function).

In addition, the book tries to find an explication for certain phenomena, such as the variation of marking practice among some late Latin authors.

Data and methodology

The research was conducted on a sample of prosaic (mainly narrative) texts from the *Brepolis* database. It includes an extensive collection of Latin texts from the period under examination, i.e., the first century BCE to the eighth century CE.

The examination of all types of marking strategies over centuries requires the creation of a corpus for multiple reasons. First, full-text search for direct discourse in Latin text databases can only be based on looking for marking means in different word forms. Thus, less typical marking means would be unnoticed. In addition, even if searching for quotation marks were possible, the use of quotation marks largely depends, as has been mentioned, on the editor's decision and contemporary conventions. For example, the texts from the Vulgate published in *Brepolis* do not use quotation marks at all, despite frequent dialogues and other instances of direct discourse. On the other hand, some editions use quotation marks to signal both the beginning of direct discourse and a new paragraph in a large quotation. In addition, modern quotation marks have more functions than signalling direct discourse. Second, the quantity of texts makes it impossible to examine thoroughly.

Texts were selected based on a previous search for typical verbal markers to choose texts where direct discourse occurs with a certain frequency. Other characteristics taken into consideration include the period of origin, genre, and supposed use of (in)formal language. The selected writings were divided into four periods: Classical Latin (ca 90 BCE–14 CE, 488 instances), Postclassical Latin (ca 14–200 CE, 679 instances), Late Latin I (ca 200–500 CE, 608 instances), and Late Latin II (ca 500–813 CE, 589 instances). The total number of cases is 2,364.

The frequency of individual markers was measured as the percentage of quotations marked by a marker out of the total number of instances found in a given work, author, or period. This approach makes it possible to compare different works, authors, and periods, but it must be kept in mind that the importance of one instance is much higher in units with a low number of instances. Therefore, the results for small units must not be overestimated. Despite these shortcomings, this approach can describe the main trends in direct discourse marking and also point out the variation within a single period.

Results

Examining the selected texts has shown various trends in direct discourse marking. Verbal markers are the most frequent in all periods; they mark 88% of instances. The verbs that occur most often are *inquam, aio, and dico*, all of them meaning 'to say'. Their frequency, however, changed over time. *Inquam*, typical of the classical and postclassical periods, decreased in frequency but did not disappear. In contrast, *aio* was scarcely used in classical Latin prose, but its frequency increased over time, especially in the late periods. *Dico* (except the present participle *dicens* 'saying') was used in classical times, although not very frequently, and spread in the late periods. The present participle *dicens* was almost absent in the classical and postclassical periods. Its frequency increased in the late periods, which is usually interpreted as a result of the influence of the translations of the Bible. Furthermore, it corresponds to the tendency to the increased use of all types of participles in later Latin texts.

The remaining verbal markers include *(al)loqui* 'to speak'; specific verbs of speech, such as *respondere* 'to answer'; and secondary verbs that acquire the interpretation of a verb of speech on the basis of context, such as *adicere* 'to add'. Some quotations are introduced by multiple verbs simultaneously, which is called multiple marking. It occurs from classical texts onwards but is also more frequent in the late periods. Typical combinations include one verb meaning 'to say' + a specific verb of speech or two different verbs meaning 'to say'.

The later periods are also characterised by the prevalence of the ante-position of markers instead of the classical interposition. The lower frequency of *inquam*, typically interposed, seems not to be a sufficient explanation since other markers can also be interposed. It is suggested that ante-position has the advantage of marking the beginning of a quotation more clearly, which may be connected to the gradual spread of silent reading. The demand for clear signs at the beginning of quotations can be related to a decrease in zero marking in the late periods.

The main trend in marking practice can be considered a growth in diversity. Late Latin authors combined classical and non-classical features to different degrees. They sometimes differed considerably from one another. This fact reflects their individual preferences and desires to follow certain models of writing, "classical" or "biblical", to use simplified labels. Even if an author seemed to prefer one of them, he usually did not avoid traits of the other. Thus, direct discourse marking in the late Latin periods shows creativity and vitality.