

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### Masaryk University

#### Applicant

Mgr. Jana Mikulová, Ph.D.

#### Habilitation thesis

Evolution of Direct Discourse Marking from Classical to Late Latin

#### Reviewer

Prof. Dr. Giovanbattista Galdi

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University of Ghent

The Habilitation Thesis, entitled “Evolution of Direct Discourse Marking from Classical to Late Latin” by Jana Mikulova provides a thorough description and diachronic analysis of the choice and frequency of means for marking direct discourse (direct discourse markers), in a large corpus of Latin literary texts. This work supplies an important desideratum in scholarly research. While there have been some linguistic studies of direct discourse in Latin, especially from a syntactic and pragmatic point of view, the way in which these discourses are introduced into the ‘host’ sentence has never been the subject of a systematic analysis.

Dr. Mikulova’s Thesis consists of five main sections. In the first, introductory chapter (pp. 1-8) the candidate presents the main aims of the work and describes the analysed corpus in detail. Chapter two (‘Theoretical Preliminaries’, pp. 9-37) illustrates the criteria chosen to identify and define direct discourse and includes a detailed description of all the means used by the authors to signal direct discourse. The third chapter, which constitutes the bulk of the study, deals with the marking of direct discourse in the texts under study (pp. 38-106) and is mainly descriptive in nature. Chapter 4 (pp. 107-127) discusses and interprets the data presented in the previous chapter and provides a concise answer to the research questions posed therein. The main findings of the research are briefly summarized in the final conclusions.

Dr. Mikulova’s work meets all the criteria required for high-quality academic research.

First, she clearly introduces the topic of her analysis, providing a broad and up-to-date overview of the literature on the subject and illustrating the criteria used to identify and define direct discourse, as opposed to both non-direct discourse and syntactically and/or functionally similar structures. To this end, the candidate convincingly combines different methodological perspectives, including both a cognitive and a syntactic approach. In addition, she provides a clear-cut definition of prototypical direct discourse, which is characterized by (a) the presence of two deictic centres (the current and the represented speaker), (b) the presence of both a current and a represented speech situation, (c) syntactic independence, with an illocutionary force of its own, (d) the semblance of a literal reproduction of a previous or future utterance and (e) compatibility with certain expressions usually excluded from indirect discourse.

Secondly, the six research questions stated at the beginning of chapter 3 are not limited to the type and number of (non)-markers found in the corpus, but take into account a variety of equally interesting aspects, such as the diachronic component (which markers appear in

which texts and periods and how often), the morphology of the markers, their frequency and distribution in relation to monologues and dialogues, and their position with regard to the reported speech (preposed, postposed or interposed).

Thirdly, and most importantly, the results of the corpus-analysis, the subsequent discussion and the hypotheses formulated by the candidate are very convincing and make an important contribution to Latin linguistic research. For instance, Dr. Mikulova persuasively suggests that the fact that *inquit* usually occurs after a short beginning of direct discourse, thus creating a pause in the discourse, should be given a pragmatic motivation, for it 'maintains the attention of the reader and creates an expectation and curiosity about continuation' (p. 53). Moreover, she notes that *dicere* appears in 52 different forms and thus seems to at least partially supply the defective paradigm of *inquit* and *ait*, which are generally restricted to the third person. Worth noting is also the observation that although there appears to be a change in the use of markers in diachrony, the old system is not completely replaced by a new one. Therefore, the development should be described 'as a broadening of available means and a decrease in frequency and change in use of some classical markers and marking strategies' (p. 112). Of particular interest, finally, is the hypothesis that in certain dialogical contexts the use of different markers can be seen as a special means of distinguishing speaking characters: in the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, for instance, *inquit* seems to mark 'the speech of the representative of Roman power' (p. 120).

However, as is normal, there also are some (minor) points of criticism. For example, the study would have benefited from a closer look at the literary genre and language of the texts, some of which are notoriously characterized by a higher incidence of non-standard features (e.g. Petronius' *Satyricon*, Egeria's *Itinerarium* etc.). Furthermore, the few references to the *Vetus Latina* (which is notoriously composed of a wide variety of testimonies and readings) are presented as if this work were a single translation of the Bible, with no mention of the various manuscripts. Furthermore, when discussing the spread of *dicens* in late, especially Christian sources, the candidate does not mention that this phenomenon is strictly related to the more general expansion of the present participle in the late centuries and to its various non-classical uses found in this period, such as the absolute nominative or its use instead of a finite verbal form.

In conclusion, Dr. Mikulova's thesis fills an important gap in the scholarly literature on Latin linguistics, by providing a valuable and well-researched study of the strategies adopted by ancient authors to introduce reported speech. Despite a few shortcomings, the candidate's presentation and discussion of the data appear accurate and convincing and her work will be of great use not only to Latinists but, more generally, to all linguists working on the subject.

**Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence** (number of questions up to the reviewer)

- Could the candidate explain the criteria behind her selection of the texts for the corpus? She points out that 'if a query showed no results or a very low frequency, the given author or text was removed from the group of eligible texts' (p. 2), but one wonders why several, especially late works with a high number of instances of direct discourse, are not even mentioned in the study (cf. Augustine's *Sermones* or Cassiodorus' *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*)
- What kind of search did the candidate carry out to detect the instances of reported speech introduced by zero or non-verbal markers?
- In the case of multiple markers consisting of a finite verb and a present participle, could the candidate give some information about the order of the two elements in the sentence?
- How does the candidate explain the unexpected spread of *ait* in the late period? Could this be due to a possible influence of the *Vulgate*, in which the verb is frequently found?

## **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled Evolution of Direct Discourse Marking from Classical to Late Latin by Mgr. Jana Mikulová, Ph.D., **fulfils** the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Classical Philology.

Date: 17/04/2025

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