

Explaining sentence structure at the beginning!

Here are several methods of explaining how words appear in a Latin sentence. They all use kinetic/tactile systems.

Method 1

English

1. Prepare signs (8 ½" x 11" works) with the following, one per sign:
dog
sees
rabbit (bunny/hare)
2. Write the English sentence on the board. (dog sees rabbit)
3. Ask for volunteers to come up and hold a sign each.
4. Put the students in a line, with subject verb object order. Tell them this is English word order
 - a. some won't understand that, in English, we use subject verb object (SVO). It's a good time to explain that! (see Latin 1e below)
 - b. this is also a good time to explain the difference between a noun and a verb.
5. Now change their order any way you like (SOV, VOS, etc).
 - a. ask them if this new order means the same thing as the first time – the sentence on the board.
 - b. when they realize it doesn't, say: now we will do it in Latin.

Latin

1. Prepare signs (8 ½" x 11" works) with the following, one per sign:
canis
videt
leporem
 - a. you can put the meaning of the word on the sign, or have the students guess.
 - b. You can put in a picture of the words.
 - c. You can use colored markers for subject and object.
 - d. You can make them all the same and using a sticky note, write Subject on one note, Verb, Object on the other notes, so you have 3 separate notes.
 - e. of course, you have to make sure they know the difference between a subject and object. This is the time to explain that, most of the time in English, the subject comes before the verb (in a statement, not a question), and the object comes after the verb.
2. Ask for volunteers to come up and hold a sign each.
3. Put the students in a line, with subject verb object order. Again tell them this is English word order.
 - a. Explain that in Latin, if a noun is the object, in the singular it will most often end in M.
if the noun is the object, then it is in the "accusative" case (I accuse YOU).
 - b. if the noun is the subject, it is in the "nominative" case – i.e., that's the "name" of the word in the dictionary.
 - c. Have one student translate the sentence.
4. Now change their order any way you like (SOV, VOS, etc).
 - a. ask them to translate the sentence.
 - b. some will figure out that it's the same as in 1, but others won't. This is the time for again explaining how, no matter where the word is, if it is in the nominative case, as it is in this sentence, it is the subject; and if it is in the accusative case, as in this sentence, it is the object.
5. Have them figure out that in Latin, the word order doesn't matter – only the endings!
However, the usual Latin order is SOV.

Note: I used canis and leporem so there is no gender problem.

You can use “direct object” for “object.”

Practice

Make up another set of signs in Latin and do the whole thing again. You don’t need to do it in English again.

Make up a worksheet and have them pick out the subject, verb and object. You can use words they know and have them translate or just use it as a grammar exercise with no translation.

Method 2

1. Instead of, or in addition to, Method 1, make up small cards (index cards are fine, and can even be cut in half) with a 3 word sentence. They can all be the same sentence, or use different ones.
2. Have the students use a partner and give each student a set of cards.
Have one of the pair make up a sentence with the cards and have the other one translate it.
Now reverse the students and have them do it again.
3. You can also do the practice, but it isn’t as important since they are manipulating the cards.

Rationale:

1. For the first method
 - a. all the students are focused on the ones standing in the front of the room
 - b. it gives some of the students the chance to move around
 - c. you will find out who is eager to show off and who is not, and can then pick students as you need them so the same ones don’t come up all the time
2. for the second method
 - a. it works well if used after the first, but can work on its own, too
 - b. students like to test each other and show off what they can do
 - c. it involves their kinetic sense; any time you use another of the senses it’s all to the good!

Time: this should take between 5 and 15 minutes. It’s also a good icebreaker for the class.