
Much has been written on Vulgar Latin. However, with all the respect one has especially for Väänänen’s *Introduction au latin vulgaire* (1963) and for Herman’s *Le latin vulgaire* (1967), no new introduction to this topic has been published for the last forty years. But revisions of and additions to the books mentioned as well as their translations betray a need of having an up-to-date handbook of Vulgar Latin. I only mention the third edition of Väänänen (1981) and the last edition of Herman in Spanish (1997) or in English (2000. *Vulgar Latin* (Pennsylvania); this translation by R. Wright is not mentioned in Kiesler’s bibliography), both translated from an unpublished French version. Furthermore, as for Vulgar Latin handbooks in the German language, there is no translation at all and the latest introduction goes back to Vossler (1953. *Einführung ins Vulgärlatein* (München)).

Although Kiesler’s (henceforth K.) aim is not to replace Väänänen nor Herman, his book is an interesting attempt to present, in a systematic and synthetic way, the extensive subject matter of Vulgar Latin, especially for students of Romance languages. He comes with a handbook covering all important aspects of Vulgar Latin in a concise but sufficient way, incorporating new contributions. The book consists of twelve chapters and two appendices, the first presenting verb forms of the Latin first conjugation, the second containing three commented texts. The volume concludes with an extensive list of references (295 items). At the end of each chapter, several questions are formulated as homework for students wishing to increase their knowledge in some special points.

After brief introductory remarks, the first four chapters explore preliminaries to the study of Vulgar Latin: the history of research (chapter 1), a discussion concerning the term ‘Vulgar Latin’ and its definitions (chapter 2), a review of external factors involved such as the extension of the Roman empire, colonization and Latinization of Roman provinces, and, in a later period, christianization (chapter 3); then come the sources of Vulgar Latin (chapter 4). This general part is followed by a linguistic description of Vulgar Latin: phonology (chapter 5), morphology (chapter 6), syntax (chapter 7), lexicon, word formation, and phraseology (chapter 8). A special chapter is devoted to Greek influence on Vulgar Latin (chapter 9) and to the typology of Vulgar Latin (chapter 10). The book concludes with a summary of the most important questions: the reconstruction of Vulgar Latin and the transition from Latin to Romance languages. Kiesler’s exposé is accompanied by numerous examples, well-chosen and always translated. The book is well structured and well presented.

K.’s aim to incorporate new research contributions into his introduction merits appreciation, in particular from the point of view of Romance linguistics. His
references are up-to-date and pertinent. As a Latinist, I would suggest to do so more rigorously for Latin as well, mainly in chapter 7 concerning syntax, the most difficult domain of reconstruction. I will formulate only a few remarks.

Putting together adverbs, subordinators, connectors and interjections in a category designed as *Partikeln* (p. 61), in the sense of ‘invariant words’, is too much of a simplification, especially since the author knows Pinkster’s 1990 *Latin Syntax and Semantics* (London), 252 ff., and should be avoided in a students’ handbook. For the sake of clarity and accurateness, *nam* is a connector whereas *quia* and *quod* are subordinators (see p. 76). Similarly, *sic* cannot be qualified as a conjunction in Latin (see p. 72).

In the sections devoted to phonology, morphology and lexicon, K. tries systematically to reconstruct Vulgar Latin forms, indicated in capitals. But it is, understandably, very difficult to apply this method in the domain of syntax. For example in the section concerning complex sentences, K.’s ideas about parataxis and hypotaxis, the first belonging to a low level of language, the second to a high one (p. 70), are very traditional (see Szantyr, A. 1972. *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (München), 482) and, I would say, outdated. Hypotaxis does not imply a question of language level but of types of subordinate clause and renewal of subordinators. Already A. Meillet (1915-6) said that even if we can hardly reconstruct Indo-European subordinators, this does not mean that there was no hypotaxis in Indo-European (*Le renouvellement des conjonctions*, in 1965. *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale* (Paris), 162). Or, more recently, H. Pinkster (1990, 139): “if Latin had not been preserved, we would never be able to reconstruct highly common subordinators such as *ut* and *cum*”. As for—the in my view minor question of—the “parahypotaxis” (apparition of a coordinator after a subordinate clause) and the example Petr. 38.8 (p. 71 ff.), it is important to consult Petersmann (1977. *Petrons urbane Prosa* (Wien), 107 and 243) as well as a commentary of Petronius (Smith, M.S. 1997. *Petronius, Cena Trimalchionis* (Oxford), 85). In fact, *et* coming after *rapuisset* is more likely a case of dittography (repetition).

K.’s explanation of the indicative mood appearing in an apodosis of a conditional clause in Latin (p. 79) goes back to Väänänen 1981, 165, § 381, as well as the quotation of *praeflare viceramus . . ., nisi . . . Lepadis recepisset Antonium*, ‘we had gained a splendid victory, had not Lepidus received Antony’. However, the indicative is semantically motivated here and produces an effect of “rupture”, as M. Lavency (1997. *Usus: grammaire latine* (Louvain), 233) shows convincingly. By the way, I would not omit this Latin grammar in a handbook directed towards students. Furthermore, while picking up Väänänen’s reference—this one and other ones—it would be convenient to check them and if necessary to update them; for example, the author should quote Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.3, not *Epist*. 