Latin Linguistics in Machtelt's way

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0.   Introduction

This article is not an attempt to give a complete survey of Machtelt Bolkestein's linguistic publications nor to give a critical evaluation of her work. It is rather an attempt to characterize her theoretical and methodological approach to Latin linguistics. It is especially her systematic use of theoretical concepts and a clear methodology that has greatly contributed to the development of Latin linguistics and has been an impulse for other colleagues in the field. Since her ideas are scattered over her publications I thought it worthwile to try to present a sketch of them here. After a more general introduction I will summarize three of her articles that I find most illustrative of her approach

1.   Theory and methodology

Machtelt Bolkestein received her training in Latin and in general linguistics as a student of classics at the Universiteit van Amsterdam. Her thesis (1980) was supervised by the latinist Anton Leeman and the linguist Simon Dik. Like the latter she approached language from a functional perspective and shared with Simon Dik the conviction that "In the functional paradigm … a language is in the first place conceptualized as an instrument of social interaction among human beings, used with the intention of establishing communicative relationships" (Dik 1997: I, 3). Machtelt Bolkestein's theoretical position can best be gathered from the following publications: 'General ideas of functionalism in syntax' (1993), 'What to do with Topic and Focus. Evaluating pragmatic information' (1998b), 'Functional Grammar and language change' (1998a). She regarded a functional approach, as opposed to a formal one, not only desirable from an abstract, theoretical point of view, but als from a practical point of view. We, latinists, have only manifestations of Latin "in use" and we cannot understand these manifestations, nor describe their linguistic form correctly, without taking into account, difficult though this may be, under which circumstances and with which intentions they were produced.

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[1]   Machtelt Bolkestein died from septicaemia on October 21, 2001.

A functional approach is also more compatible with much of the linguistic research of Latin in the past. Notions like "psychological Subject" and "emphasis" bear close resemblace to contemporary pragmatic notions like "Topic" and "Focus".

Another basic assumption underlying several of Machtelt Bolkestein's publications can again best be formulated in the way of Simon Dik: "I believe that a simple lesson can be drawn … : take languages seriously. Whenever there is some overt difference between two constructions X and Y, start out on the assumption that this difference has some kind of functionality in the linguistic system. Rather than pressing X into the preconceived mould of Y, try to find out why X and Y are different, on the working assumption that such a difference would not be in the language unless it had some kind of task to perform" (Dik 1997: I,18). Obviously this principle is sometimes difficult to operationalize with our limited and "fossilized" material: we too often simply lack an adequately stratified number of instances to prove that there are social, regional, historical, pragmatic, text type, or still other differences. In Machtelt Bolkestein's work there are several good examples that it is at least worthwhile trying. I just mention here her work on the differences between the Accusative and Infinitive and the Nominative and Infinitive (1981, 1983)[2]. The three article to be discussed later offer concrete illustrations of the usefullness of the assumption mentioned above.

A third assumption in Machtelt Bolkestein's work is that description is not possible without theory (nor the other way around). Now, whereas everybody will readily agree that a description of for instance the Latin cases is not well possible without a certain conceptual apparatus (e.g. "Subject", "nominative", "singular"), latinists, not only those working on literary topics, tend to get upset when new concepts are introduced or old concepts redefined, even if it is evident that using such new or adapted concepts leads or may lead to new insights into the Latin language. One of the reviewers of her dissertation (1980) thought that it would have been better for her to give less space to the theoretical framework and instead deal with another Latin modal expression. Evidently she preferred to participate in the theoretical debate as well, and this made her one of the rare latinists taken seriously outside their proper field, as is also apparent from the broad range of her publications (see also below)[3].

The fourth and final assumption I want to discuss in this context is that linguistics is an empirical science, based on verifiable facts and on lines of argument that are explicit, understandable, and repeatable by other scholars in the field. Machtelt Bolkestein was neither unique nor the first to base herself on this assumption. Within Latin linguistics Heinz Happ (see Bolkestein 1977) and Marius Lavency, just to mention a few scholars outside Amsterdam, have been working on the same assumption.

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[2] See now Heberlein (2002) for an alternative (semantic, as opposed to Bolkestein's pragmatic) explanation.

[3] The title of Bolkestein *et al.* (2002) reflects this paragraph. See also the 1991c article.

Key notions in this approach are (i) taking into account the type of text in which a certain phenomenon is found, (ii) using frequency data in an appropriate way, and (iii) examining the distributional properties of the phenomenon under investigation. I will refrain myself to the last two items.

The frequency with which a certain phenomenon occurs usually depends on a number of factors and is for that reason the superficial reflection of the interaction of those factors and not an independent fact by itself. Machtelt Bolkestein (1985a) explicitly made the point of "quantitative vs. qualitative grammar", reacting to publications of Talmy Givón, one of her most admired colleagues. We will see below that the frequency data of the various Latin anaphoric devices are the outcome of a number of different factors. Latin word order is another case in point. Here statistical data have been used in a simplistic way to formulate "rules", which leaves us, and the linguistic community at large, with the idea that (Classical) Latin was an SOV language, simply because that was what Julius Caesar liked and found appropriate for his type of text. Obviously, any statistical observation should be based on an adequate number of instances and it should be stated explicitly which instances have been taken into account[4].

Turning now to distributional properties, I will at this point limit myself to a list of objective tests (or: criteria), used in establishing the function of constituents within their context. Illustrations of the applicability of some of these tests will follow below. The tests regularly used in Machtelt Bolkestein's work are the following:

(a)   substitution
In order to establish the role of a constituent in its context it is useful to examine which other constituents might replace it structurally, that is leaving the configuration of the context as it is.

(b)   coordination
Two or more constituents can be coordinated if they have the same semantic function, (usually they also have the same syntactic function and relatively often they also belong to the same lexical category) in their context[5]. There are a limited number of – well-known – exceptions to this rule and some authors go relatively far in considering constituents as semantically more or less equivalent[6], but as a heuristic tool coordination works quite well. As illustrations take exx. (1) and (2).

(1)   *confiteretur ... si fecisset, et **magno animo** et **libenter** ...* ('If he had done it, he would confess magnanimously and with all his heart', Cic. *Mil.* 80)

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[4]   One critic reviewing the (1980) dissertation objected that it was not clear on which data the conclusions were based. On the complete files of the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, of course (1980: 153, n.1).
[5]   For the rules of coordination in Latin see Pinkster (1990).
[6]   See Pinkster (forthc.) on Pliny the Elder.

(2)   *Auli autem filius, o di immortales! quam **ignavus** ac **sine animo** mil*es! ('But A.'s son, my god! What a weak and spiritless soldier', Cic. *Att.* 1.18.5)

(c)   juxtaposition

The 'juxtaposition' test is the opposite of the coordination test. Juxtaposition should not be taken in its literal, local sense for immediate neighbouring constituents, but for constituents occurring within the same clause without any mark of coordination[7], such as *libenter* and *coram* in example (3).

(3)   **libenter** *haec **coram** cum Q. Catulo et Q. Hortensio ... disputarem* ('I would willingly argue this face to face with Q. Catulus and Q. Hortensius', Cic. *Manil.* 66)

libenter and *coram* are at different levels of the clause, *libenter* modifying the whole clause, *coram* the nuclear predication *haec cum Q. Catulo et Q. Hortensio disputarem*, graphically represented in the following way:

{libenter [coram (haec cum Q. Catulo et Q. Hortensio disputarem)]}

Constituents at different levels can as a rule not be coordinated[8]. Constituents that are on the same level, but fulfil different semantic functions cannot be coordinated either: So, for instance, Place and Time Adjuncts are not coordinated[9].

(d)   omissibility

The fourth test consists in verifying whether a constituent can be omitted without leaving the rest of the context in which it functions ungrammatical or its meaning essentially changed.

(e)   question words

Finally, to determine the function and status of a constituent it is useful to see to which question word(s), if any, that constituent might be given as an answer. The question word test is actually just a variety of the substitution test mentioned above. Another useful test (are there correlative expressions?) is another variety I will not discuss in detail.

2.   Functional Grammar

In most linguistic theories, even if they have a functional approach and have something like a "pragmatic component", pragmatics seems to come, as it were, on top of a fully specified phonological, morphological and syntactic structure, creating, for instance, a specific constituent order with salient information coming late in its clause or a specific intonation contour. This was also very much the case in the original design of Simon

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[7]   This is slightly more complicated than formulated in the text: there is also asyndetic coordination. This detail is not relevant for the argument.

[8]   I must confess that *clam*, *coram*, and *palam* have an unusual broad coordination potential.

[9]   There are, for example, no instances of *hic et nunc* in Classical Latin (checked in BTL).

Dik's Functional Grammar. One of the contributions of Machtelt Bolkestein, both to Latin linguistics and to Functional Grammar is to have shown that specific constructions are determined, among other things, by linguistic choices made earlier in the context, and by planning what is to come later on in the context. This theoretical stand is most manifest in her 1991b article on "Syntax and Pragmatics" and in her 1998b article on "Evaluating pragmatic information". How this works out for Latin is shown in articles as early as 1983 and 1985b, in which she shows that with three-place verbs like *donare* the choice between the two alternative constructions (accusative + ablative or dative + accusative) is to a large extent determined by whether one of the two constituents (the "Recieving entity" and the "Entity given") is already present in the preceding context, and, if so, what syntactic function it has.

A second aspect I want to mention is Machtelt Bolkestein's contribution to the development of the concept of "layering" in Functional Grammar (see her 1992 article). The idea that clauses do not have a "flat" structure but that there is some sort of hierarchy is neither original nor very recent. In fact, it is present in Kühner-Stegmann and other Latin grammars, be it not in a very explicit and systematic way. However, its current detailed form in Functional Grammar proves useful for the description of certain phenomena in Latin, as will become apparent later on in this article in the discussion of certain uses of the dative[10].

3.   Latin linguistics

I shall now proceed to a discussion of three articles that, to my mind, illustrate best the profit of applying new concepts in order to advance our understanding of certain problematic issues in Latin. I start with a Dutch article (1980) on the *ab urbe condita* construction, which clearly shows her systematic approach to differentiate between two seemingly more or less equivalent expressions. A very well-known Tacitean instance of the *ab urbe condita* construction is (4).

(4)   ***occisus dictator*** *... pulcherrimum facinus videbatur* ('the killing of the dictator seemed the fairest of high exploits', Tac.*ann.* 1.8.6)

The constituent *occisus dictator* in (4) differs from the identical string in (5) in that the participial element *occisus* cannot be omitted (test d) without causing the remaining expression to become ungrammatical (**dictator ... pulcherrimum facinus videbatur*), whereas omission of the participle in (5) leaves us with a perfectly grammatical expression (*dictator in foro iacebat*)[11].

(5)   ***occisus dictator*** *in foro iacebat* ('the killed dictator was lying on the forum')

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[10]   For the application of the "layering" concept to Latin see also Revuelta Poigdollers (2002).

[11]   One might ask how we know that something is grammatical or ungrammatical. The answer is: if we do not find a suitable parallel (in a sufficient amount of data) we cannot assume that the expression involved is grammatical.

That *occisus dictator* in (4) behaves as an integral unit in which both constituents are obligatory can also be proved if we apply the substitution test (test a): it might be substituted as a whole by either a complement clause 'the fact that the dictator had been killed' – with two alternative options (4a) - or an action/event/state noun 'the killing of the dictator' (4b)[12]:

(4a,1)   **quod dictator occisus erat**… *pulcherrimum facinus videbatur*
(4a,2)   **dictatorem occisum esse**… *pulcherrimum facinus videbatur*
(4b)   **caedes dictatoris**… *pulcherrimum facinus videbatur*

I will not illustrate that (4) and (5) can also be shown to be different when we apply the question word test (e).

The next step – having in mind the assumption "take languages seriously" - is to see whether in all contexts in which the substitutes in (4a) and (4b) are found they may in turn be substituted by an *ab urbe condita* construction, and whether the substitutes themselves can be exchanged freely. This is evidently not the case, as is evidenced by the following two sets of examples.

(6a)   **urbis expugnatio** *difficilis est* ('the capture of the city is difficult')
(6b)   ****urbs expugnata** *difficilis est*
(6c)   ****urbem expugnatam esse** *difficile est*
(6d)   ****quod urbs expugnata est** *difficile est*
(7a)   *dixit* **me aegrotare** ('he said that I was ill')
(7b)   **dixit* **me aegrotantem**
(7c)   **dixit* **aegritudinem meam**

The final conclusion of the article – I pass over a number of further considerations – is that the nouns involved and the complement clauses overlap to some extent, and that the *ab urbe condita* construction is found in a smaller number of contexts than those in which the other expression types overlap, as illustrated in figure (1).

insert figure 1 and start a new parapgraph

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[12]   "action/event/state" nouns include "verbal" nouns. The Dutch expression is "gebeursubstantief".

Machtelt Bolkestein has devoted a considerable number of articles to discourse phenomena. Her (2000) article about the anaphoric use of *is*, *hic*, *ille*, relative connection, and Ø (zero-expression) shows the diversity of her approach and is at the same time a good example of the complexity underlying at first sight simple statistical data. She examines these five expression types and shows the differences between them in frequency and in properties, taking into account six parameters. I mention these briefly, with a few concrete results.

- text type (for example, there is a difference between Cicero's letters [*ille* more frequent] and Caesar's narrative [*is* more frequent]);
- discourse structure;
- (dis)continuity of referents;
- type and function of referents (for example, *hic* is relatively often used to refer to preceding text segments (clauses, parapgraphs, etc.), *ille*, by contrast, is almost exclusively used to refer to entities; Ø is more frequent after a preceding Subject referent, *ille* more frequent after a preceding non-Subject referent);
- (cognitive) accessibility of referents (for example, in Cicero's letters *ille* is used relatively often as a signal that Cicero assumes that his addressee knows the entity he is writing about: so-called "exophoric" or "recognitional" use of *ille*);
- relative position of the words (for example, *hic* is more often sentence initial than *is* and *ille* are).

I do not have enough space to summarize how according to Machtelt Bolkestein these and other distinctions derive from the indiviual characteristics of the devices involved.

The final topic I want to present is the Latin dative. In her 2001 article on 'Possessors and experiencers in Classical Latin' Machtelt Bolkestein comes back to her proposal of 1983 to regard the so-called possessive dative, as in (8), as an obligatory constituent (an "argument") with the semantic function of Experiencer.

(7)   *Sunt **tibi** regna patris Dauni, sunt oppida capta / multa manu …*
        ('You have your father Daunus' realm, you have the many towns your hand has taken', Verg. *Aen*. 12.22-3)

The reason for proposing that the dative constituent is an Experiencer is that these dative constituents are most often animate (and human)[13]. It is often assumed that the possessive dative is more or less equivalent to the so-called possessive genitive, but this is not correct. Even when animate entities are involved, there are several contexts in which the dative may not be substituted for the genitive, for example (8).

(8)   ***Cuiusvis hominis** /*cuivis homini est errare* …* ('Any man is liable to mistake', Cic. *Phil*. 12.5)

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[13]   Notable exceptions can be found in Pliny the Elder (Pinkster forthc.).

Another use of the dative that is often considered equivalent to a genitive is exemplified by (9), now often called a sympathetic dative.

(9)   … *sese omnes flentes **Caesari** ad pedes proiecerunt*. ('they all threw themselves in tears at Caesar's feet', Caes. *Gall*. 1.31.2)

The relationship between the dative *Caesari* and the *pedes* is that between a Possessor and a Possessee, as it is in (10), with a genitive substituted for the dative, and this superficial similarity explains why they are often regarded as equivalent.

(10)   … *sese omnes flentes **Caesaris** ad pedes proiecerunt*. (cf. Caes. *Gall*. 7.23.5)

However, a closer look shows that they only partially overlap. Whereas the dative constituent is almost always animate (and human)[14], there is no such preference in the case of the genitive. Whereas the possession relationship is only one of "inalienable possession" for the dative, this restriction does not hold for the genitive. Furthermore, in the case of the dative the constituent is affected in some way by the verb, but this need not be so in the case of the genitive. These two restrictions on the use of the dative explain why we do not find (11) and (12).

(11)   **sese **Caesari** ad templum proiecerunt* ('they threw themselves at Caesar's temple')
(12)   **ei membra videbam** ('I saw him on the limbs')

There is also a syntactic difference betwee the genitive and the dative expressions. The former is an Attribute on the Noun Phrase level, whereas the dative is an optional constituent at the sentence level (it is a satellite). Since the dative constituent is usually animate, Machtelt Bolkestein suggests that this satellite has the semantic function of Experiencer, and belongs to the same layer as Manner, Instrument, and Circumstance satellites, modifying the state of affairs. Continuing along these lines she suggests to also regard as Experiencers the so-called dativus iudicantis and the so-called ethical dative, exemplified by (13) and (14), respectively.

(13)   *Quintia formosa est **multis***. ('Quintia seems beautiful to the crowd', Catul. 86.1)
(14)   *Hic **tibi** <in> rostra Cato advolat*. ('Suddenly up springs Cato to the platform', Cic. *Att*. 1.14.5)

The dativus iudicantis clearly "delimits the truth value of the proposition", in the way expressions like *meo iudicio* do. The dativus ethicus functions on the level of the utterance, in the interaction between the language producer and the addressee, in the way vocatives do.

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[14]   *(herbae) **quibus** flos ante quam caules exeant, **quibus** caulis ante quam flos*. ('plants producing flower before stalk, stalk before flowers', Plin. *nat*.1, p. 69.2M.) (Bolkestein 2001: 275).

Elements of this proposal can be found in the characterization of (some of) these usages in earlier treatments (see, for example, Kühner-Stegmann [1912: I,323] on the ethical dative) and are also present in Schmid's (1988) treatment of "free" datives in German. However, Functional Grammar, as developed also with the help of Machtelt Bolkestein, neatly captures these differences in its layered clause model (see figure 2, based on Dik 1997: I,50).

insert figure 2 and start a new paragraph

This impression of Machtelt Bolkestein's scientific contribution to Latin linguistics must stop here. Apart from precise, detailed, and, as I hope to have shown, well-argued proposals her publications, including the two just discussed, are full of suggestions for

further research. May these proposals and suggestions be a source of inspiration for future research. There is so much that we don't know[15].

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[15]   I would like to thank Caroline Kroon for her comments on earlier versions.

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figure 1: The semantic range of the *ab urbe condita* construction

AUC = ab urbe condita
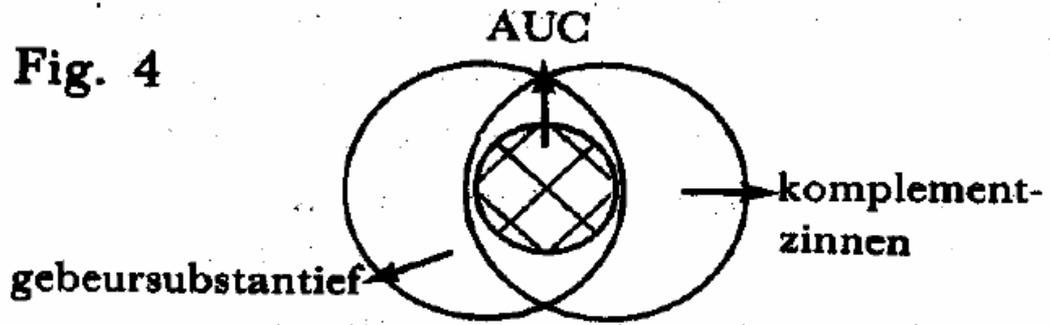gebeursubstantief = action/event/state noun
komplementzinnen = complement clauses

figure 2: Experiencers in the layered structure of Functional Grammar

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                              Clause
                        "speech act/utterance"
          -----------------------------------------------------------
          |                                          |
          π4                                         σ4    dativus
                                                            ethicus
                            [Proposition]
                            "possible fact"
          -----------------------------------------------------------
          |                                          |
          π3                                         σ3    dativus
                                                            iudicantis
                        [Extended Predication]
                    "located, qualified state of affairs"
          -----------------------------------------------------------
          |                                          |
          π2                                         σ2
                          [Core Predication]
                        "qualified state of affairs"
          -----------------------------------------------------------
          |                                          |
          π1                                         σ1    dativus
                                                            sympatheticus
                         [Nuclear predication]
                           "state of affairs
          -----------------------------------------------------------
          |                                          |
        Predicate                               Arguments
        "property"                                   |
        "relation"                                   |
                                                 Term(s)   dativus
                                                "entities"  possessivus
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