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Latin *oboedio*: between phonological explanation and diastratic variation

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Abstract

If we accept the origin of *oboedio* as a compound of *ob* and *audio*, the result is completely clear from the semantic point of view but unexpected from the phonological one. In fact, the diphthong *oe* is not justified as a result of reduction (it should be **obūdio,* like *inclūdo* and *preclūdo* from *claudo*, and *defrūdo* from *fraudo*, etc.) or of other changes. The phonological hypothesis is mostly founded on reconstruction of the ancient stages of *audio*, probably from **au̯izdii̯ō* (*ób-au̯izdii̯ō* > **obou̯izdii̯ō* > **oboizdii̯ō* > *oboedio*). Instead, a second explanation considers *oboedio* a hypercorrected form of an original that has not survived: **obūdio*.

This paper aims to analyse these reconstructions and selects the only one that would seem to yield effective results. Using evidence from a sociolinguistic perspective, it explains that *oboedio* contains a form of hypercorrection, probably invented by middle-class speakers, involving the archaizing and ennobling power of the diphthong *oe*, which the overall conservatism of Latinity, and in particular of some institutions and uses, (law and religion) may have kept alive.

KEYWORDS: Latin *oboedio* and *audio*, etymology, phonological reconstructions, diachronic sociolinguistics, typological and cognitive patterns.

1. *The purpose and the 'embarrassant' problem of the diphthong* oe

The Latin verb *oboedio* is evidently a compound of *ob* plus *audio*[1]. However, it should not contain the diphthong *oe* because it should be **obūdio* as a result of reduction, in the manner of *claudo* > *inclūdo, preclūdo, exclūdo, occlūdo*, etc., *causo, causa* > *recūso, accūso*, etc., and *fraudo*[2] > *defrūdo, lavo* > *-lŭo, -luvium, pavio* > *depŭvio* (see Niedermann, 1906: 30-31; Palmer,

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[1]   Latin works are abbreviated with both the author's name and title in Latin (e.g. Hor. *sat.* 1.2.24) on the basis of CONTE *et al.* (2010). Where Latin texts are quoted, the editor's name and year of publication follow the quotation (e.g. ed. POWELL, 2006). All the translations from Latin are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[2]   *Claudo* and *fraudo* have the same sequence as *audio* (*-aud-*). Even if the *a* in *fraus* – the denominative of which is *fraudo* – was probably not etymological but due to an obscure, and so far unexplainable, alternation between *au* and *ū, ō* as in *naugae* – *nūgae* (cf. EM *s.v.*), the reduction *fraudo* > *defrūdo* could have been partially helped by a hypothetical **frūdo*.

1954: 220; Godel, 1961: 57-58; Meiser, 1998: § 53.4)[3], or it should have kept the original diphthong *au*.

In fact, as we know, there are other compounds of *audio* like *exaudio*, *in(d)audio* and *subaudio*[4] where the reduction does not have any effect. It is reasonable to agree with Meier-Brügger (1980: 288) that «Der Diphthong *au* des Hintergliedes unterliegt keiner Vokalschwächung und weist auf späte Entstehung bzw. junge Rekomposition dieser Komposita. Älteren Datums kann einzig oboedīre sein». If a recomposition was possible for the other compounds of *audio*, it may be argued that *oboedio* was an archaic verb, although it has existed since Plautus.

Two ways to solve this «embarrassant» (Vendryes, 1902: 284) issue have been proposed. The first one was a phonological explanation proposed by scholars like Schulze (1887: 251), Solmsen (1894: 150-151), Szemerényi (1960: 240-245) and Meier-Brügger (1980). Their results converged in influential handbooks and dictionaries such as WH, Sommer (1948), Leumann *et al.* (1977), Meiser (1998) and De Vaan (2008). The hypothesis is mostly founded on reconstruction of the ancient stages of *audio*, probably from *auizdii̯ō (cf. Greek ἀΐω and αἰσθάνομαι "perceive") and the changes ób-au̯izdii̯ō > *obou̯izdii̯ō> *oboizdii̯ō> *oboedio (except for Szemerényi, who considered a labial dissimilation from *-au-* > *-ou-* and then *-oi-* possible).

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[3]   Probably *au > eu > ou > ū* (Niedermann, 1906: 40-41). According to EM, *s.v. laus*, the compounds *adlaudo, conlaudo, dilaudo, elaudo*, from *laudo*, could have kept the radical *a* in order to avoid confusion with the *lūdo* group. Despite this, several verbs do not present any reduction from *au* to *u*.

[4]   *Subaudio* appears for the first time in Seneca, but the majority of attestations are in the Vergilian comments by Servius, where it means "to imply (a word omitted)", as if the meaning of the prefix *sub-* "secretly" (see *subaudio* in Apul. *met.* 5.19 ed. Zimmerman, 2012: *sed tantum nocturnis subaudiens uocibus* and the verb *subausculto* "listen to secretly") has shifted from the subject ("hear secretly") to the object ("hear something hidden, that is not explicit"). In this case, attention should be drawn to the polysemic value of *subaudio*, because it stands between the hearing sphere and the cognitive one (*subaudio* as "to imply (a word omitted)" is a synonym of *intellego*). See the frequent places where *subaudio* and *intellego* are close and interchangeable, e.g. Serv. *Aen.* 1.76.1 edd. Rand *et al.*, 1946 *Subaudis "dixit", quod ex posterioribus intellegitur, ut supra notauimus*. Furthermore, there is *praeaudio* "hear in advance", a late compound with a temporal-value prefix, in *Digest* (1.16.6 *pr.* 2 edd. Mommsen and Krüger, 1868-1870: *praeauditas custodias*) and in Cassiodorus (*hist.* 9.14 edd. Jacob and Hanslik, 1952: *neque praeaudivimus omnino*). Finally, *inaudio* is a very rare verb (16 records in PHI#5.3. See later). It is only attested in early, and probably strictly informal (all the four cases in Cicero are from *Epistulae*), Latin (cf. García-Hernández, 1977: 132). *Inaudio* also has the form *indaudio* (9 records in PHI#5.3, 7 in Plautus). Cf. Lindsay (1894: 178) on the syncope due to the ancient protosyllabic stress: «The same shortening may have caused that confusion of the old preposition *indo* (*endo*) with the preposition *in* (*en*) (*ind(o)gredior* etc. becoming by syncope identical with *ingredior*) which led to the disuse of *indo* and the adoption of *in* in its place. Thus *indaudio* (Pl.) was completely ousted by *inaudio* by the time of Terence, and in the classical period compounds with *indo* are rare, only being found as archaisms in poetry, e.g. *induperator* Juv.».

The other solution is based on a spelling and diastratic hypothesis (Havet, 1881: 410; Wackernagel, 1893: 55; Vendryes, 1902: 284; Burger, 1928: 40; Palmer, 1954: 270-271). As will be demonstrated, the phonological approach does not seem to have yielded effective results so far. The goal here is to analyse and discuss every reconstruction from every perspective that it is possible to adopt: those from lexicology in cognitive semantics, etymological good praxis and hypothetical sociolinguistic reconstruction. At the end, I will try to add new evidence to explain *oboedio* from a sociolinguistic point of view.

In fact, the approach used in this research is a synthesis of lexicological data from historical linguistics, in particular of the contribution of etymology (dictionaries and specific studies) and of epigraphy, cognitive interpretations of semantic patterns (see the link between hearing perception and the semantic field of obedience), typological structures (see Greek ὑπακούω "listen to", "obey" from ἀκούω "hear", and German *gehorchen* "obey" from *hören* "hear"), and diachronic sociolinguistics, which is the explanatory key to solving the *oboedio* question.

The paper is organised as follows. First I outline the formal (§ 2.1) and semantic features (§ 2.2) of Latin *oboedio* in order to define the identity of this verb. Then, I review the phonological (§ 3) and sociolinguistic (§ 4) explanations, and from there I draw some conclusions (§ 5).

2. Oboedio – ID *card*

2.1. *Formal features:* oboedio, ob + audio

Over the years, the only scholar not to accept the origin from *audio* has been Pisani (1948: 17; 1968: 68-69). In his opinion, the diphthong *oe* is clear if we consider another initial root word, i.e. *oboedio* as **ob-boedio*, where **boed-* comes from **bheidh-* and is comparable with Latin *fido, fides, foedus*, Greek πείθομαι, "to obey", Russian *ubedít'*, "to persuade", Slave *bĕda*, "necessity", Albanian *bē*, "oath" (cf. *besë* "faith, promise, pact"). However, this solution presents many difficulties both at the formal and the semantic levels.

From a formal point of view, it is useful to note the late form *obaudio* as a proof of a link between *oboedio* and *audio*, at least in terms of speaker perception (see also Aug. *serm.* 111 ed. Carrozzi, 1983: *multi auditis et pauci oboeditis*; Isid. *or.* 10.196 ed. Lindsay, 1911: *oboediens ab aure, eo quod audiat imperantem*. See below). *Obaudio* is attested in Apuleius (*met.* 3.15 ed. Zimmerman, 2012), Tertullian (*Marc.* 2.2.7 ed. Moreschini, 1972) and in the

Vulgata (ed. 1979), and Festus wrote: *oboedire obaudire* (ed. Lindsay, 1913). Regarding Christian and late texts, it is possible to consider the direct influence of Greek ὑπακούω "obey" (from ἀκούω "hear")[5], as can be seen in a passage from Augustine, who quotes the *Itala* version and where the Hippo bishop deprecates the over-frequent use in Latin of Greek syntactic structures such as the genitive object of a perception verb (*Graeca magis locutio est*): *et non obaudierunt vocis meae*, which corresponds to οὐχ ὑπήκουσαν τῆς φωνῆς μου (*locut. hept.* 7.9. edd. Zycha and Tempsky, 1894; cf. Coleman, 1975: 142 and Löfstedt, 1959: 90)[6]. Although in that period the influence of Greek was deep and evident in Latin, and the form *obaudio* cannot be considered proof of the certain origin of *oboedio* from *audio* (we could also judge this form to be folk etymology), in my opinion, *obaudio* is an etymological and analogical form with respect to the other compounds of *audio* (*exaudio*, *in(d)audio*, *subaudio*, etc.).

2.2. *Semantic features:* oboedio *as 'auditory obedience'*

The connection between *audio* and *oboedio*, which, as said, was transparent for late Latin speakers, can be found throughout literary Latinity:

(1) a. [Pa.] *Nunc tu ausculta mi, Pleusicles*. [Pl.] *Tibi sum oboediens*.
    (Pl. *mil*. 805-806 ed. Lindsay, 1904-1905)
    [Pa.] "Now, you listen to me, Pleusicles!" [Pl.] "I obey you!"

  b. *Ut ad uerba nobis oboediant*. (Cic. *Caec*. 52 ed. Clark, 1905-1911)
    "To obey our words."

  c. *Multi auditis et pauci oboeditis*. (Aug. *serm*. 111 ed. Carrozzi, 1983)
    "Many people hear and few obey."

  d. *Oboediens ab aure, eo quod audiat imperantem*.
    (Isid. *or*. 10.196 ed. Lindsay, 1911)
    "*Oboediens* comes from 'ear' (*aure*), because you listen to who orders."

If we expand our point of view to a perspective capable of joining typological and historical data with a concrete cognitive interpretation, we

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[5]   The correspondence between Latin *oboedio* and Greek ὑπακούω is essentially typological, not a literal translation, nor due to a common etymological origin. Such a typological resemblance can sufficiently reinforce a reciprocal link between two words coming from two different languages, in particular in a bilingual environment like Late Antiquity.

[6]   The genitive *vocis meae* was eliminated in the *Vulgata* text.

can find the bonds that tie the two semantic areas in question: hearing and obedience. In Sweetser (1990: 41-43), the listener perspective is indicated by two semantic features: [attention] and [receptivity]. An internal reception often yields understanding, i.e. from a perception dimension to a cognitive one through a well-known metaphorical and metonymic shift. In many perception verbs in various (in time, space and phylogenesis) languages, receptivity is in contact with obedience, as we can see from Table 1 by Viberg, by way of example, referring to English (1983: 157-158):

Perception	Cognition	Social
hear	"know", "understand"	"meet", "'obey"

Table 1. *Extended meanings of verbs of hearing perception.*

How can we explain these passages? What Viberg calls 'social meaning' (in a hearing perception verb such as *meet* or *obey*) is a communicative dimension where verbal relationships between human speakers occur. The characteristic feature of receptivity in hearing perception is an active will to pay attention. This will can also be conceived as a disposition to obedience because when we give an order or a prescription with words and speech the listener's attention grows. In this sense, as Ibarretxe-Antuñano notices (1999: 65), phylogenetically different languages present similar extended meanings. Some examples of hearing verbs that mean "obey" are:

(2) a. Italian: *Ti ho detto che devi* ascoltare *tua madre.*

b. English: *I told you to* listen *to your mother.*

c. Spanish: *Te he dicho que* escuches *a tu madre.*

d. Basque: *Seme batak ez eukan* entzunik.
        "One of the sons was not obedient."

In all these cases, the hearing perception verb expresses what Viberg names 'activity', i.e. the intentional will to perceive (see Viberg, 1983; 2001). In Danish *lystre* "to obey" has lost its original meaning linked to hearing: cf. English *listen*, German *lauschen*, Swedish *lyssna*. In Sanskrit *śruṣṭí-* "obedience" comes from *śru-* "hear" (see also Clackson, 2007: 52).

In terms of word formation, we have already observed that Greek ὑπακούω, "to listen to, to obey", comes from ἀκούω "to hear", and German *gehorchen* "to obey", and *Gehorsam* "obedience" comes from *horchen* "to listen to".

This semantic pattern also occurs in Latin, as Nonius reminds us: *auscultare est obsequi* (370.9 L) "listen means obey". Auditory obedience in Latin[7] is expressed by specific structures that involve hearing perception verbs:

(3)   *ausculto* + dative "to heed", "to obey"; e.g.:
    a. *Cui iussus siet, auscultet.* (Cato *agr.* 5.3.2 ed. Mazzarino, 1982)
       "He must pay heed to anyone to whom he has been bidden to listen."
       (trans. Hooper)

    b. [Pa.] *Nunc tu ausculta mi, Pleusicles.* [Pl.] *Tibi sum oboediens.*
       (Pl. *mil.* 805-806 ed. Lindsay, 1904-1905)
       (see above)

(4)   *dicto audiens sum*, "to obey" (until 1st century A.D.); e.g.[8]:
    a. *Dominoque dicto audiens sit.* (Cato *agr.* 142.1.5 ed. Mazzarino, 1982)
       "And obey the master."

    b. *Ego sum Iovi dicto audiens, eius iussu nunc huc me adfero.*
       (Pl. *Amph.* 989 ed. Lindsay, 1904-1905)
       "I obey Jupiter, I'm here now on his orders."

The semantic field of Latin obedience has been researched by García-Hernández (2001). From a structuralist point of view the semantic field is organized as follows:

(5) archilexeme: *pareo*
    lexemes: *pareo, obtempero, obsequor, oboedio, obsecundo.*
    classeme: dative

Archilexeme	Communication dimension	Obedience modalities
pareo	- non-immediate: *(dicto) oboedio* - immediate: *tibi ausculto, te audio* - durative: *dicto audiens sum*	- moderation: *obtempero* - pleasure: *obsequor* - favour: *obsecundo*

Table 2. *The semantic field of Latin obedience in García-Hernández (2001: 752).*

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[7]   See Anscombre and Pierrot (1985) for the probable performative value of such phrases.

[8]   Such a periphrastic construction comes to be used quite seldom. In PHI Latin corpus (see next footnote), we find 52 occurrences of *dicto audiens sum* (Cato 1, Pl. 6, *B. Afr.* 2, Caes. 4, Cic. 12, Nep. 4, Varro 2, Liv. 9, Quint. 2, Apul. 1, Hyg. 1, Porph. 1, Iust. 5, Symm. 3), and only 6 of *dicto oboediens sum* (Pl. 2, Acc. 1, Liv. 1, Gell. 1, Vulg. 1), with a more meaningful distribution in early and classical Latin. From the functional point of view, as already Marouzeau (1910: 3-4) noticed, the periphrasis shows a nominal value, comparable to *cupiens sum* + genitive (see Piras, 1989-1990: 73 ff., for a detailed discussion on the criteria to distinguish between nominal and verbal value in classical and late periphrastic constructions. See the relevant references on this topic in Amenta, 2003 and Bentain, 2010).

Besides the internal classification (non-immediate, immediate, durative) which concerns aspectuality and the Aktionsart categorization, what is important to note is the consistency of the communication dimension and the crucial role played by the hearing perception lexemes *audio* and *ausculto*.

If we calculate the distribution of obedience verbs in a Latin language corpus such as PHI#5.3[9], we find that the communication dimension represented by *oboedio*, *ausculto* + dative and *dicto audiens sum* amounts to about 7% of the whole verb-obedience area.

Lexemes	ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY	FQ. % IN OBEDIENCE FIELD	FQ. % IN TOTAL PHI LATIN
pareo	3080	79%	0.0422%
obsequor	401	10%	0.0055%
oboedio	204	5%	0.0028%
obtempero	160	4%	0.0022%
obsecundo *ausculto* + dat. *dicto audiens sum*	102	2%	0.0014%
Total	3947	100%	0.0540%

Table 3. *The semantic field of Latin obedience verbs: distribution in PHI#5.3 Latin corpus.*

2.3. *Formal and semantic features. Conclusions*

Oboedio turns out to be closely related to the auditory dimension both formally and semantically: formally, for its indisputable derivation from *audio* "to hear", "to listen to"; semantically, because of the relationship between hearing attention and receptivity to auditory obedience, as happens in many languages.

The verbal-communication dimension also recurs in a particular sphere of the Latin language, the legal and sacred one. If there is a special obedience in Latin strictly connected to hearing perception (*oboedio*, *dicto audiens*

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[9]   PHI#5.3, or PHI Latin, is a Latin language corpus compiled by Packard Humanities Institute of Los Altos, California. Created for CD-ROM but available online at *http://latin.packhum.org/* since September 2011, this corpus was collected between 1987 and 1991. It contains almost all the Latin literary texts up to 200 A.D. plus some late authors like Servius, Porfirius, Zeno, Justinian and the *Vulgata*. The whole corpus boasts 7.3 million words and contains an excellent choice of the best critical editions.

sum, *ausculto* + dative), namely a communicative act but linked to an order and duty situation, then it is possible to recall a verb like *interdico* "to forbid, prohibit, interdict". *Interdico* is also etymologically linked to the verbal-communication dimension. It comes from *dico* "to say" (cf. the same formation of *antarə-mruye* "I interdict", in the Gathas' language of the Avesta) and, in addition to the question of the polysemy of communication verbs (*verba dicendi*, hearing *verba sentiendi*, etc.), evokes another important element, the performative value of words.

In general, *oboedio* is a low-frequency verb in Latin texts (fq. 0,0028% in Corpus PHI#5.3). Half of all its occurrences are in the *Vulgata* (about 70) due to the evident influence of the frequent Greek biblical verb ὑπακούω "to obey". This may be the most important source for its recovery in the Romance languages during the Middle Ages[10].

In particular, the *Septuaginta* influence causes an increase in *perfectum* forms in Latin *oboedio*, because before Jerome's version *oboedio* was mostly *infectum*, but Greek ἀκούω did not present this constraint.

3. *Phonological perspective*

All the phonological explanations begin with the difficult etymology of *audio*. Two starting points are possible. The first is:

a.   From *au̯izdii̯ō*, so that *audio* < **au̯is* + **dʰ-ie/o-* "to render manifest to hearing"; see Schulze (1888: 251); Solmsen (1894: 150-151); Meier-Brügger (1980).

**au̯is-* cf. Gk. ἀΐω and αἰσθάνομαι "to perceive" (ἀϝισ-, cf. Skt. *āvíḥ* < **h₂eu-is-* "clearly"), **au-s-i-* derivative suffix in *-s-* and dual *-i-* > *auris* "ear"
**dʰ-* "to render" (*facio*, τίθημι) or **d-* "to give" (*do*, δίδωμι) or resultativity. Cf. Gk. suffix -ϑ-, Lat. *condo*, *abdo*, *perdo*?, *reddo*? etc.

As Meier-Brügger (1980: 288) notes, «Die Bedeutungsverengung von

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[10]   According to this hypothesis, Italian literary texts, already in the 13th century (Uguccione da Lodi, Andrea da Grosseto, Giacomo da Lentini and Albertano. Cf. data in TLIO) recover the Latin verb in the following forms: *obedire*, *obbedire*, *ubidire*, *ubbidire* and *obbidire*. The first cases show a more conservative form, i.e. closer to the Latin model, while those with *-i-* in the second syllable have probably been subjected to a metaphonetic process.

'wahrnehmen' zu 'hören' wäre speziell lat.», as happens in German *hell* "bright", but *hallen* "to resound".

The second starting point is:

b. From *ausdii̯ō*, so that *audio* < **aus* + **dʰ/d -ie/o-* "to give/put ear"; see Bréal (1878: 408-412); Szemerényi (1960); Pisani (1968: 68-69).

*aus- root "ear" > *auris* "ear"
*dʰ "to render" (*facio*, τίθημι) or **d-* "to give" (*do*, δίδωμι) or resultativity. Cf. Gk. suffix -θ-, Lat. *condo*, *abdo*, *perdo*?, *reddo*? etc.

From a third conjugation verb, **ausdo, -ĕre* dropping the sibilant before the dental consonant (cf. *idem* < **is-dem*) would become *audio* with the addition of the *-i-* suffix (< *-ye/yo*), a typical formation process for a 4th conjugation verb (see Palmer, 1954: 267-268; Ernout, 1953: § 227 B), as *vincio* comes from *vinco*, *condio* from *condo*, and *dormio* from *dormo*. It is possible that in this process *audio* could have been conditioned by a special influence of *sentio*. From a typological and comparative point of view, see Persian *goš dad* "to give ear, listen to".

Starting from **au̯izdii̯ō* (solution 1) implies explaining *oboedio* in these steps:

*ób-au̯izdii̯ō > *obou̯izdii̯ō > *oboizdii̯ō > oboedio

where «the reduced **-a-* in the second syllable was rounded and the following **w* was lost before **a-* could develop into /u/. The resulting diphthong /*oi*/ was protected by the following **z* from monophthongization to *ū* or *ē*» (De Vaan, 2008 *s.v. audio*. Cf. Leumann *et al.*, 1977 for the same sequence).

The most significant problem in this hypothesis is the elision of the semivowel *u̯*. According to phonological handbooks and studies, it is possible to illustrate all the cases where a semivowel *u̯* is elided in Latin (for a concise review, see Meiser, 1998: §67):

u̯ > 0/_[*o, ō, u, ū*] probably 3rd century B.C.; e.g.:
suodales > sodales, *Gnaivod > Gnaeo*, **su̯e-u̯orsos > seorsus*,
*su̯osor/su̯esor > soror, **olai̯u̯om > oleum*[11], etc.

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[11] For *oleum*, Safarewicz (1969: § 49; 1974: 172, 182) considered a simpler shortening, according to the rule *vocalis ante vocalem corripitur*, from *ei* in *ĕ* (**oleiuom >*olēom > oleum*. Cf. also *dĕus* from *deiuos*), instead of a semivowel loss.

$ṷ > 0/V_1\_V_1$ probably 4th century B.C; e.g.:
pro-ṷorso- > prorsus, *laṷatrina > latrīna*, *obliṷītus > oblitus*,
ṷīṷita > vita,
diṷītis > ditis

but *auārus*, *seuērus*, *diuīnus*, *lauātio*, *obliuīscor*, *diuītiae*, and *ouum*,
nouus, *sequor* by analogy (gen. *oui*, *noui*, 2nd sg. *sequitur*).

Moreover, there are two changes which are attributed to different periods (see Vendryes, 1902: 284; Rix, 1966: 157): a change during the prehistoric period: *-oṷi-, -oṷe-, -oṷo- > -oṷu- > -ou- > -ū-* (e.g. **reṷorsos > rursus*, **noṷen-dinai* (**neṷ-*) *> nūundunae* and *nōndinae*, **spoṷe-ma > spūma*, *proṷidens > prūdens*, *iouestod > iustō* – not a syncope change but an assimilation; and one during the historic period: *-oṷi-, -oṷe- > -oṷo- > -oo- >-ō-* , e.g.**moṷe-t-o > motus*, *co-ṷentio > contio*.

Only the second change ($ṷ > 0/V_1\_V_1$) produces a real loss of $ṷ$, but only under a strict condition, i.e. between two identical vowels. Furthermore, numerous exceptions like *auārus*, *seuērus*, *diuīnus*, etc. should be highlighted (cf. also Monteil, 1973: 68-70)[12]. The other cases are probably events of assimilation (moreover, for some words the reconstruction is very uncertain). Therefore, *oboedio* presents a different situation[13].

This explanation has been rejected by some scholars who do not accept *oboedio* from **ob + aṷizdii̯ō* (solution 1). As Fay (1920: 124) wrote, «Of course the elaborately fanciful primate *awisdio* has been invented to turn a special phonetic trick for *oboedio*» and, furthermore, to justify a relationship with Greek ἀΐω and αἰσθάνομαι "to perceive" (from ἀϝισ- < **h₂eu-is-* "clearly"). This is Pisani's (1968: 69) consideration, which leads us to the sec-

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[12] Again, throughout the Latin period the semivowel tends to disappear (through elision or assimilation) in intervocalic position, especially before back vowels. In addition to the examples mentioned, the *Appendix Probi* shows some such changes in use: *avus non aus, flavus non flaus, rivus non rius, pavor non paor* (*App.Pr.* 29, 62, 174 and 176 ed. ASPERTI and PASSALACQUA, 2014). On the other hand, no semivowel disappearances happen after *i*, as would be needed for *oboedio*, and more generally neither in the first hypothesis for *audio*. In fact, *novus* does not evolve into**nous* as a regulating force in the paradigm (see *novi, novā*, etc.). Cf. VÄÄNÄNEN (1982, [1963¹]: § 90).

[13] Two specific examples are usually mentioned relative to *oboedio*: *amoenus* "lovely" from **amoṷeno- < *ama-ṷen-o-* (see MEISER, 1998: 71) and *proelium* "battle" from **próṷelio-m < *pro-gᵘelₐₗ-io-* (see BLÜMEL, 1972; KLINGENSCHMITT, 1980). These words represent the only real comparison capable of explaining the diphthong in *oboedio*. It is a pity that their reconstructions are so uncertain that all the best etymological Latin dictionaries are doubtful about them (see WH, EM and DE VAAN *ss.vv.*). KLINGENSCHMITT (1980) insists on mentioning personal names like *Cloelius* from (?) **kloṷelios*, but cf. Volscian *Cloil* and Latin *Clylius, Coelius* from (?) **koṷelios, Boelius* from (?) **boṷelios*. It is more logical to presuppose **oi* and not **oṷe* in these roots. In fact, the relationship with Proto-Indo-European**kl(é)u-* is not clear.

ond phonological solution: «Scomparso così l'obbligo di ficcare a forza un *i* in *audio* per ricavare *oboedio*, ritornerà in onore la vecchia ed evidente etimologia di *audio*: composto di **aus-* "orecchio" (latino *auris*) con una formazione di **dhē-* "porre": così come noi diciamo "porgere orecchio". Morfologicamente sembrerebbe trattarsi del denominativo da un **aus-dh-io-* "colui che porge orecchio" o di un femminile astratto **aus-dh-ā* "il porgere orecchio"».

The second phonological hypothesis was mostly supported by Szemerényi (1960) (see also Bréal, 1875) and consists in a labial dissimilation from *ou* to *oi* due to the labial feature in *ob-*:

*ob-au(s)dio > *ob-ou(s)dio > *oboi(s)dio > oboedio

The only comparable example is the conjectured sequence for *līber* "free": **leudheros > *louberos > loiberos > līber*. Against this opinion we should acknowledge that, first of all, according to *līber*, it should be **obīdio*. Second, the labial dissimilation seems to be limited to pre-labial position and possibly after *l* (cf. Palmer, 1954: 268). Third, there are a consistent number of counter-examples, such as *Pūnicus*, *commūnis*, *pūnio*, *mūnio*, etc., where labial dissimilation is absent (cf. Godel, 1961: 58 n. 12). Finally, there is the fact that *b* and *u̯* form a sequence fully marked by the feature [+grave]. Natural languages generally show consistency in co-articulation of the feature [+labial][14].

In conclusion, it should be considered that exploration of reconstructions of *oboedio* from a phonological perspective produces more problems than answers.

4. *A sociolinguistic perspective*

Towards the end of the 19th century, studies in historical and comparative linguistics took a different direction to solve the problem of Latin *oboedio*. We are talking about scholars like Havet (1881: 410), Wackernagel (1895: 55), Vendryes (1902: 284), Burger (1928) and Palmer (1954: 220). What they focused on was that a Latin *ū*, in addition to in many cases being the result of reduction of *au* in a second syllable, can also originate from the diphthong *oi*. This happened from Indo-European *oi̯* to Old Latin *oi̯* / *oe* and

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[14] Moreover, only from the 1st century B.C. does it happen that *b* and *u* tend to merge in a unique medial sound *b* (bilabial constrictive. Cf. contemporary Spanish and Catalan intervocalic *b*). See spellings like Νέρβας for *Nerva*, *baliat* for *valeat* at Pompei, *plebes non plevis* (*App.Pr.* 9 edd. Asperti and Passalacqua, 2014). See Väänänen (1982, [1963¹]: § 88-89).

from there to Classical Latin *ū*. The last step (the reduction of *oe* to *ū*) has variously been dated between the end of the 3rd century B.C and the beginning of the 2nd century B.C.[15]

As is known, the whole of Latinity experienced a general archaizing tendency in spelling, literature and pronunciation (see Clackson and Horrocks, 2011: 90 ff.). A *ū* might be expressed in two other forms, marked by archaizing conservatism: *oe* and *oi* (cf. Marouzeau, 1911: 270-273; Leumann *et al.*, 1977: § 73; Adams, 2007: 44-45)[16]. Some words present all three realizations, some others just two, but they all generally settle into just one form, as shown in Table 4.

OI	OE	Ū	LOCI
ploirume	*ploera*	*plūra*	*ploirume* occurs in The Scipioni tomb (CIL I² 9); *ploera* in Cic. *leg.* 3.6.10 ed. Powell (2006).
moiros	*moerus*	*mūrus*	*moiros* occurs in CIL I² 1722; *moerus* in Enn. *An.* 16.418 ed. Skutsch (1985), Acc.*tr.* 348 ed. Ribbeck (1897), Lucr. 4.220 and 6.926 ed. Müller (1975), Varro *Lat.* 5.50 (*Sacra Argeorum*) 5.141, 5.142, 6.87 (Tab. Censoriae) ed. Collart (1954), Verg. *Aen.* 10.24 ed. Conte (2009), Plin. *NH* 15.73.3 (quot. Cato) ed. André (1960), Quint. 8.3.24-26 (about Verg.) ed. Winterbottom (1970), Serv. *in Aen.* 10.24.3 edd. Rand *et al.* (1946).
coiravit	*coerari*	*cūravit*	*coiravit* occurs in Alatri inscription, Gracchi period (CIL I² 1166); *coerari* in Cic. *Leg.* 3.10.8 ed. Powell (2006).
oino	*oenus*	*ūnus*	*oino* occurs in The Scipioni tomb (CIL I² 9); *oenus* in Pl. *Truc.* 102 ed. Lindsay (1904-1905).
loidos		*lūdus*	*loidos* occurs in CIL I² 364.
comoinem		*commūnis*	*comoinem* occurs in *Sen. C. de Bacch.* (CIL I² 581; E 126).
	oesus	*ūsus*	*oesus* occurs in Cic. *leg.* 3.10.8 and 3.10.14 ed. Powell (2006).

Table 4. *Graphic variation in terms with* oi, oe *and* ū.

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   [15]   Cf. SAFAREWICZ (1969: § 50) at the end of the 3rd century B.C.; LINDSAY (1894: 240-241), at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C.; SOMMER (1902: 88), 2nd century B.C.; BENEDETTI and MAROTTA (2014: 27 ff.), 2nd century B.C.; ANDERSON (1909), from 204 to 154 B.C. Probably the earliest epigraphic evidence for the change is found in *utier* (CIL I² 33); (MEISER, 1998: § 47) before the end of the 3rd century B.C. In *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* (CIL I² 581, 186 B.C.) both the spellings *oi* and *ou* are archaisms standing for an actual pronunciation *ū* (e.g. *plous*).
   [16]   MAROUZEAU (1911: 270) writes: «Cette conservation des diphtongues a pu être favorisée par diverses causes: dans l'écriture, par une manie persistante d'archaïsme, encouragée peut-être par l'exemple du grec, et, dans la prononciation, par la diffusion du parler de Rome».

This tendency occurs both in epigraphic and literary texts. The archaic *facies* of CIL I² 9 *honc oino ploirume cosentiont R[omane] / duonoro optumo fuise uiro* is quoted in Cicero in Classical Latin as follows: *hunc unum plurimae consentiunt gentes populi primarium fuisse uirum* (*de sen.* 17.61 ed. Powell, 2006), but when the subject of the text (e.g. a legal one) needs a higher and more solemn tone, the same author uses a conservative style. Cf. phrases in Cic. (*Leg.* ed. Powell, 2006): *loedis publicis* (2.22), *ploera* (3.6), *coerari oesus sit* (3.10). See also Lucretius 1.29, 1.32 and 5.1308 (ed. Müller, 1975) *moenera* (from **moi-*) for *munera*, and Cato *or.* 167.6 (ed. Malcovati, 1953) *impoene* for *impūne* (see Palmer, 1954: 121-122)[17].

In addition to this, archaic forms with *oe* or *oi*-marks are frequent in the ironic tone, especially in Plautus (see *moenitum*, *Bacch.* 926 ed. Lindsay, 1904-1905), and language with a teasing or a heroic and lofty spirit (see also *Cist.* 540, *Pers.* 554, 559; *Pseud.* 384, 585a ed. Lindsay, 1904-1905).

This is a pan-Latin tendency to archaism that is particularly found in epigraphic and legal texts. Moreover, as Adams (2007: 45) writes, «the various examples cited here from republican legal documents are to be treated as archaising forms suited to the language of law, with no relevance to regional variation». This is why I talk of a pan-Latin – i.e. in time and space – tendency[18].

According to these considerations, as has previously been affirmed, it is possible to establish two different levels of the Latin language: a conservative one and a usual one. Words that come from a root in *oi* may present a double form: the first is characterized by the archaic mark *oe*, and the second one by *ū*[19].

OE	Ū
moenia, *moerus*, *moiros*	*murus*
poena Gk. ποινά	*pūnio*
Poenus Gk. Φοίνικες	*Pūnicus*
foedus	**fūdus* (conjectured by Wackernagel, 1895: 55)
oboedio ?	**obūdio*

Table 5. *The double series* oe / ū *(both from* oi*)*.

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[17]   For archaism as an ingredient of Latin poetry generally, see Palmer (1954: 98).

[18]   Again, during the Augustan period we can read the archaizing spelling *faciundum coiraverunt* (CIL I² 1252).

[19]   Against this hypothesis, Meiser (1998: § 63.4) writes: «Hinter wortanlautendem *p-*, *f-* bleibt *oi̯* als *oe* erhalten außer vor *i* der Folgesilbe, vgl. *poena* (<= griech. ποινή) vs. *pūnio*, *Poenus* vs. *pūnicus*, *foedus* (zu *fīdes*)». See the same opinion in Parodi (1893: 437) and Safarewicz (1969: § 50.3).

I have also inserted *oboedio* on the basis of Burger (1928: 40): «*oboe-dire* n'est pas, au début, un mot du vocabulaire courant; il semple qu'on ait affaire à un forme technique de la langue du droit; quand il est entré, as-sez tardivement, dans la langue commune et a tendu à remplacer *parēre*, l'orthographe a pu influencer la prononciation». Similar views can be found in Havet (1881: 410), Wackernagel (1895: 55), Vendryes (1902: 284), and Palmer (1954: 220), who considered *oboedio* a hypercorrection (or *notation renversée*, or *umgekehrte Schreibung*) of a popular and usual form **obūdio*[20]. Since *ū* was the result both of archaic Latin *oi* (e.g. *ploira*, *plūra*, etc.) and of *au >ū* reduction (e.g. *claudo*, *occlūdo*; see above), the conjectured hypercor-rection in *oboedio* means that this verb should be assigned to a specific level of Latin, which we have defined as conservative language (in particular, law and religion).

The question now is: is *oboedio* «une forme technique de la langue du droit» (Burger, 1928: 40)? The answer is uncertain. Legal texts (e.g. *Insti-tutiones* by Gaius, *Codex Theodosianus*, *Codex Iustitniani*, *Digestus*) show a limited number of cases of *oboedio*, but not as significant a number as to be able to draw any conclusion. In the *Corpus civilis*, verbs like *obsequor* and *obs-ervo* are much more frequent than *oboedio*. As Szemerényi (1960: 241) wrote, «we have no right to assume that it was only in the language of the law that *oboedio* was pronounced since the evidence shows, if proof were needed, that the verb was used in the most diverse phrases and contexts». In fact, *oboedio* occurs in Plautus, Accius, Afranius, Cicero, Nepos, Livy, Sallust, Curtius, Pliny, Seneca, Valerius Maximus, Apuleius, Gellius, Suetonius, Tacitus, Ser-vius, *Vulgata* and Justinian, but it is absent from classical poetry (data from PHI#5.3. See also Eichenseer, 1964).

Moreover, with regard to the spelling *oe* in Latin there is another issue which we can call Greek-loan interference. If we browse the incomparable repertory that is *Der Vokalismus des Vulgärlatein* by Schuchardt, we discover that in many cases of Greek loanwords the diphthong *oe* appears in place of an original Greek *upsilon* (1867: II, 278 ff.). Well-known examples, already from the time of Plautus, are: *lagoena* from the Greek λάγυνος "flask, bot-tle" (Pl., Varr., Hor., Pers., Petr., Plin., Apul., etc.). Other forms are: *lagun-cula* (cf. Burger, 1928: 40), *lagona* (from Cato), late forms *lagyna*, *lagaena* (from which λαγήνα); *Antamoenides* (Pl. *Poen.* 1322) from the Greek first

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name Ἀνταμυνίδης, *Antamonides*; *goerus* (Non., Auson. ?), *gyrus* (Catul.), from the Greek γῦρος "circle".

A much discussed question is that of how Greek *y* was pronounced and spelt in the Plautus period: *u*, *oe* or *ü*? If we consider examples like Pl. *Ps.* 703 *turanne* from τύραννος (Pl. *Ps.* 1197, 1200) *sucophanta* from συκοφάντης, the wordplay in Pl. (*Bacch.* 129 ed. Lindsay 1904-1905), *Non omnis aetas, Lyde, ludo convenit*, and 362 *Crucisalum me ex Chrysalo*, 687 *in cruciatum Chrysalum*, 1183 *Chrysalus* [...] *excruciem*, we can affirm that the spelling of Greek *y* was probably varied (mainly with *u* and *y*) but it was pronounced [u]. This seems to confirm the authenticity of the forms *lagoena* and *Antamoenides* with regard to a *u* hypercorrected by the diphthong *oe*. Otherwise, we should return to the evergreen idea of an intermediate phase between *oi*, *oe*, *ü* and *u*, where the spellings of Greek loanwords fit.

Can the diphthong *oe* in *oboedio* be considered similar to such Greek loanwords? And then, was *oboedio* an artificial spelling or the effective pronunciation? Before we try to answer these questions I would like to add a significant element. Varro, in *Lat.* 5.50 (ed. Collart, 1954) quotes from *Sacra Argeorum* a place in Esquilino that is called *Lucus Poetelius*, probably linked to the *gens Poetelia* that appear in Livy, like a family of high rank during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. (see, for example, the *Lex Poetelia de ambitu* dated 358 B.C.). The Esquilino area was a particular zone in the city of Rome. It was traditionally connected to the underworld, death and water. On the hill was the Mephitis Temple, an archaic sanctuary dedicated to Mephitis, goddess of waters and of sulphurous waters, wells, underground cavities and the afterlife. On one side of the hill there was an area called *Puticuli* (see Varro *Lat.* 5.24 ff.), which was a cemetery – simple natural holes and wells in the ground – where poor people and slaves were buried. On the basis of these few elements we can perceive a folk-etymological interference between *puteus* "well" and *puteo* "to stink" (cf. *putidus*, *putresco*). In fact, Varro in the same passage (*Lat.* 5.26) describes the smell from the rotting corpses in the *puticuli*. The name of the city of Puteoli in Campania, although probably derived from *puteus* "well, water zone", has always been connected to sulphurous smells from the Solfatara volcano, and so from *puteo* "to stink". In *Lucus Poetelius* and in the gentilitial name *Poetelia*, we can suspect an attempt to ennoble the family name by hiding the allusion to the stink through the use of an archaizing element, i.e. the diphthong *oe*, which occurs in words like *Poenis*, *poena*, *moenia* – words probably connected to legal and sacred original meanings (a conservative and high area of the Latin language) – or in archaizing forms like *moerus* or *coeravit* (see above).

In conclusion, we can affirm that, once we acknowledge the failure of the phonological approach, the only possible solution is that *oboedio* contains a form of hypercorrection with the archaizing and ennobling power of the diphthong *oe*. It does not seem that *oboedio* was a verb limited to a specific area (law and religion) of the language, but the conservatism of the whole of Latinity, and in particular of some institutions and uses, can have kept the form with *oe* alive. Even if we do not have precise comparisons, a small number of Greek loanwords where *oe* renders *y* can help us to better understand the unexpected form *oboedio*. Moreover, the particular case of *Lucus Poetelius* on Esquilino can represent an interesting comparison, especially regarding the socio-semantic causes of the presence of the diphthong *oe*. Finally, there is no reason to assume that *oboedio* was not pronounced with a real diphthong, unless we accept that *poena* or *moenia* also sounded like *pūna and *mūnia.

5. *Conclusions*

To solve what is only apparently the simple issue of *oboedio*, a sort of exploration in different areas of linguistics has been necessary. Comparative data, credited with a great tradition in historical linguistics (from Schulze, 1887 to Meier-Brügger, 1980), have been combined with more recent typological patterns (Viberg, 1983; 2001) enriched by a cognitive-linguistic categorization framework (Sweetser, 1990; Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 1999). To sum up, *oboedio* is definitely a compound of *ob* and *audio*. The phonological explanations have not yielded effective results. The solution proposed here is a form of hypercorrection with the archaizing and ennobling power of the diphthong *oe*. After the valuable and essential contribution of diachronic and comparative linguistics, typological linguistics and cognitive categorization, it is, then, sociolinguistics that casts light on a possible solution.

Who was the inventor of such a hypercorrect form? Probably, *oboedio* was invented by middle-class speakers who made an incorrect imitation of the archaizing styles of the professional community connected to the legal-sacred sphere.

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