

EXPANDING THE FIELD OF CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY: INTERNATIONAL WORDS

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Specialities may differ, but the core of classical philology is, and has been, the study of Greek and Latin texts from classical antiquity. The roots of these languages are studied through comparative linguistics and other methods, and the development of Greek and Latin is studied through the Middle Ages, the early modern and the modern periods: Byzantine Greek and different types of modern Greek on the one hand, Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin on the other.

Thus, the study of the development of the two classical languages, Greek and Latin, covers 2–3 millennia. However, these languages also have a special kind of afterlife, namely through their explosive expansion into *other* languages, from antiquity until today. The aim of the present paper is to give a broad introduction to this field of study – enough to show that there is a lot to find. As examples are chosen the three Indo-European languages English, Spanish and Norwegian, all of which provide rich material for our purpose. In the national philological disciplines, the treatment of Greek and Latin elements are often not given special attention, but are studied alongside other aspects of the language in question. Cooperation with classical philology would be an advantage. Moreover, only classical philology can give the full picture, seen from the point of view of Greek and Latin, and explain *why* and *how* these languages have lended so many words and word elements to so many vernacular languages. Another aspect of our field, which I call ‘international words’, is the enormous potential that these words have, if disseminated properly to the general population. If the subject of international words is taught systematically, the learner will be able to see the connections between words, learn new words faster, and develop a deeper understanding of the vocabularies in – for example – English, Spanish and Norwegian.

A description of the field

With the exception of languages with a specific policy against loan words – Icelandic, for example – the vocabularies of modern languages contain a substantial amount of words and word elements borrowed from the classical languages. These words may have been borrowed either individually or in thematic groups, either directly or through another language. One can go abroad and pick up words, or they can be brought home by strangers; they can be acquired orally or from a text – you can read them and repeat them, letter by letter (Skautrup 1944, vol. 1, 147).

Among the borrowings there will often be compound words, and in the case of Latin, these are mostly compound with prefixes. In the process of transformation, words or word elements may undergo certain changes, changes that may be specific for each language. Potentially, the treatment of loan words and their characteristics may also be specific for each receiving country and language. Such specific treatment may be occasioned by foreign letters, spellings, sounds, or the necessity to adjust the inflection to the national standard. For example, Crystal has a useful survey of plural declension of loan words in English (Crystal 2003, 201).

In other words, the process of borrowing and the treatment of loans are specific for each language, each country. However, there are also international processes, for example the

formation and development of vocabularies for scholarly fields and professions. Such professional vocabularies can be international and common for many languages, possibly with some adjustments. An example is the medical vocabulary with its roots from antiquity. The tendency is that parts of the body are described in Latin, whereas illnesses have Greek names.

Loan words

Languages borrow words from each other. This process is connected with other factors; among them are trade and new products and inventions. In antiquity the cultural influence, language included, went from Greece to Rome. Many of the Greek loan words in modern languages were borrowed into Latin in antiquity. A brief examination of this category of words gives as result more than thirty words beginning with an *a-*: *absinthium*, *academia*, *acanthus*, *aenigma*, *aer* ('air'), *aether*, *alabaster*, *allegoria*, *ambrosia*, *amphitheatrum*, *amphora*, *analogus*, *anapaestum*, *ancora* (anchor), *androgynes*, *anomalía*, *antipathia*, *apathia*, *archetypus*, *architectura*, *arithmetica*, *aroma*, *asparagus*, *astrologia*, *astronomia*, *asylum*, *athleta*, *atomus*, *aula*, *aura*, *authenticus*, *autographus*, *automatum*, in addition to the prefixes *arche-* and *anti-*. Moreover, there are specialized words, for example in the above-mentioned field of medicine: *arthritis*, *asthma*, and later loans: *anatomia*, *anaesthesia*, *amnesia*. All these Greek loan words in Latin are used in modern languages today. And we could add the name of the constellation *Arctus* (bear), which originated the words 'Arctic' and 'Antarctic' (with the prefix *anti-*).

It is not coincidental that so many words were borrowed from Greek into Latin. The Greek culture was highly developed in a period when Latin was a dialect used by a local tribe of farmers, and the most ancient texts we have in Latin were written some 500 years after *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. With the expression 'highly developed' I mean that the language was used both orally and in writing in various ways and to describe various areas of human life and relations in a variety of genres: epic poetry, lyric, forensic and deliberative speeches, comedy, tragedy, philosophy, rhetoric. It is understandable that the Latin language needed to borrow words from this neighbour, for example to cover the field of philosophy; both Lucretius and Cicero complain about the 'poverty' of their mother tongue.

Likewise, it is not coincidental that the words borrowed from Greek into Latin are mostly nouns. According to Björck, the borrowings were mostly based on reading, not listening, and they had an intellectual character as names of concepts and concrete things (Björck 1971, 48).

Words for 'car' in different languages

One might think that a modern invention like the car would have a modern name. However, many modern languages have developed their names for this means of transportation from ancient roots. An early name was 'automobile', a hybrid, developed from Greek *αὐτός* ([*autós*], self) and Latin *mobilis* (moveable) – a name that expresses the miracle of a vehicle that could move without horses. It is interesting to see that some languages have kept the whole word (Russian: 'avtomobil'), some use the first part of the word only (German 'Auto', Finnish 'auto'), whereas the Scandinavian languages use instead the last part: Danish, Swedish and Norwegian: 'bil'. The French 'voiture' derives from Latin *vectura*, which means 'transportation' and later got the meaning 'wagon'. Italian 'macchina' and Azerbaijani 'maşın' take their origin from Attic Greek 'mechané' via Latin *machina*, or perhaps from the Doric dialect, which used the form 'machaná'. The English 'car' and the Spanish American and Portuguese 'carro' originate from a Gallic word via Latin *carrus*. And even though the most frequent Spanish word for car, 'coche', has Hungarian origin, we may sum up that the words for car in many European languages take their origin from the classical languages. We may also sum up that these words are quite different, and it could be interesting to find out why.

The field seen from the individual languages, Part 1: *English*

Some languages avoid as far as possible the use of alien terms [...], but England has always welcomed the alien [...]. The language has been particularly open to foreign influence, partly through the succession of invaders who came into contact with English speakers during the Middle Ages: partly through the enterprise of the English themselves, who have carried their language into the far corners of the world, where it has gathered, like a snowball, new matter as it passed on its way.

(Serjeantson 1961, 1)

The languages that have been most interesting as lenders, for English, as for a number of other languages, are Greek and Latin. Numbers like 70–80% of the vocabulary have been put forward. For sure, very many words in daily use take their origin from Latin and Greek. In Sheard's opinion, readers will be surprised to discover how many words that have found their way from natural science, theology and philosophy into the daily language of people with an average education. Most of these words were well established in English by the year 1500. Examples are elephant, hippopotamus, panther, rhinoceros, logic, conviction, legal, allegory, library, admit, conclude, depression, discuss, interest, interrupt (Sheard 1954, 241–244).

The amount of loan words can be explained partly by history. First of all, *Britannia* was a Roman province from the reign of Claudius for nearly 400 years, to 410 AD, when Emperor Honorius withdrew the Roman troops from the island. But the Latin influence did not stop; Latin was the language of a highly esteemed civilization, from which the Anglo-Saxons were eager to learn. Their contact with this civilization lasted for centuries, first through commerce and the military forces, and later through religion and scholarly contact (Serjeantson 1961, 77). From the time of William the Conqueror English received more Latin words indirectly, through French. In the early modern period, the development of the sciences went faster, and new results were in most cases presented in Latin. Latin was also not only the language of the Christian church, but also of the universities. Latin was the *lingua franca* – spoken as well as written – and it was easy to borrow words from such a well-known language.

The *terminus ante quem* for a loan is, of course, the first occurrence of the word in text. Also the character of the loans can give clues (learned words, words related to the church, etc.), and some words were introduced to several Germanic languages at the same time, e.g. 'copper' (Serjeantson 1961, 78). But the phonetic form of the word is the most secure factor: sound changes took place systematically and can be dated quite precisely (Serjeantson 1961, 78).

Today, English has the role as the leading *lingua franca*. English is a language that you are lucky to have as your mother tongue, and if not you should learn to master it. Arguably, much can be gained in this learning process through the study of, for example, Latin and Greek prefixes. Let us look at some examples from Latin, with the verb *ferre* (to carry) as an example. Note that the prefixes change form through assimilation etc.

Latin prefix	Meaning of prefix	Latin verb	English examples
<i>con-</i>	together with, completely	<i>conferre</i>	confer, cf.
<i>dis-</i>	apart, un-, between	<i>differre</i>	differ, different, difference
<i>ob-</i>	towards	<i>offerre</i>	offer (verb, noun)
<i>prae-</i>	at the peak of, too early, in front of	<i>praeferre</i>	prefer, preference

<i>re-</i>	back, against, again, away	<i>referre</i>	refer, referendum, reference
<i>sub-</i>	underneath, at the bottom of, upwards, a little bit, instead of	<i>sufferre</i>	suffer
<i>trans-</i>	to the other side, on the other side, completely, change into something else	<i>transferre</i>	transfer

It is illustrative to study the concrete meaning of these verbs: carry together, apart, in front of, etc. Moreover, our knowledge of the meaning or meanings of these and other prefixes will help us acquire a deeper understanding of other composed words, too. For example, *ex-* (*e-*, *ef-*) is found in a considerable number of English words, and it is useful to remember that this prefix has the basic meaning ‘out of’, ‘out from’. The verbs exact, expand, expose, express, extend and extract are only a few among many.

An interesting aspect of the English verbs from Latin is the fact that in quite a few cases it is the perfect participle stem that has been borrowed and not the Latin infinitive. This is the case with ‘exact’ – with Latin infinitive *exigere*, perfect participle *exactus*, and ‘extract’, with infinitive *extrahere* and perfect participle *extractus*. This practice can be a clue to the understanding of the journey of particular verbs. For example, ‘confiscate’ is borrowed from the Latin perfect participle stem and not from French ‘confisquer’, which is developed from the Latin infinitive. Likewise, ‘instruct’ does not come from French ‘instruire’ (Sheard 1954, 245). However, ‘expose’, and probably also ‘express’ have been borrowed through French or Old French (Harper s.v.).

If a word is registered for the first time after ca. 1500 and does not have a particularly French form, it is most likely that the word was borrowed from Latin directly, because after this time scholars usually went to Latin for their learned loans (Sheard 1954, 246). Probably many new words were introduced into English through translations.

Part 2: Spanish

The Romans conquered Spain and – unlike the province *Britannia* – their language (Latin) won hegemony in most of the Iberian peninsula. The Romance languages started as dialects and developed into national languages, and it can be very useful to study the specific changes in each of these. Spanish had a long period of Arab presence and this set its mark on the language. A number of words were borrowed, many of which begin with ‘al-’: ‘almohada’ (pillow), ‘almacen’ (warehouse) – but also other words, like ‘azucar’ (sugar).

The first grammar over the Spanish (Castilian) language, written by Antonio de Nebrija and published in 1492, marked a new era of the language. Among phonetic changes in the following epoch is the disappearance of the distinction between ‘b’ and ‘v’.

A special trait of today’s Spanish is the change of ‘f-’ in the beginning of (some) words followed by a vowel into an ‘h-’ – and an ‘h’ in this position is not pronounced in modern Spanish. Examples: Latin *farina* (flour) > Spanish ‘harina’; Latin *facere* (to do) > Spanish ‘hacer’; *fabulari* (talk) > ‘hablar’; *folia* (leaves, pl.) > ‘hoja’. The latter example also shows the development from neutrum plural to femininum singular when neutrum disappeared in Spanish. A characteristic trait in Spanish is the double l, pronounced as ‘y’ in English ‘you’. This sound was developed from consonant followed by an ‘l’ in the beginning of a word (‘cl-’ or ‘pl-’), as for example Latin *plorare* (cry) > Spanish ‘llorar’, and *clamare* (call) > ‘llamar’ (Lloyd 1987, 224–225).

Another trait that is characteristic for Spanish, in contrast to other Romance languages, is the stronger tendency to diphthongization.

Latin	Spanish	French	Italian
<i>caelum</i>	cielo	ciel	cielo
<i>mortem</i>	muerte	mort	morte
<i>petra</i>	piedra	pierre	pietra
<i>porta</i>	puerta	port	porta
<i>septem</i>	siete	sept	sette
<i>tempus</i>	tiempo	temps	tempo
<i>terra</i>	tierra	terre	terra

Usually, only vowels in stressed syllables are diphthongized; this goes for all three languages. However, whereas only vowels in open syllables are diphthongized in Italian and French, Spanish diphthongizes vowels in both open and closed syllables (Lloyd 1987, 122).

Part 3: Norwegian

Obviously, in each country and for each language, philologists and linguists will write the history of their own language. Thus, the specialists on Norwegian language have responsibility for the study and description of Greek and Latin loan words and word elements in Norwegian – to take my own language as an example. In such books one may find lists of early loan words from Latin – which is explained mostly by commerce. Examples are ‘katt’ from Latin *cattus*, ‘vin’ (wine) from *vinum* and ‘kjeller’ (cellar) from *cellarium* (Indrebø 1951, 54). A new wave of loan words arrived around the year 1000 when Christian faith made its arrival, and with it, Christian institutions and words. Examples are ‘engel’ from Greek ἄγγελος ([ángelos], angel) via Latin *angelus*, ‘kloster’ (monastery) from Latin *claustrum*, and ‘erkebiskop’ from Greek ἀρχιεπίσκοπος [arkhiépískopos] (Skautrup 1944, vol. 1, 169, 170, 299; Indrebø 1951, 64). The prefix ἀρχι- [arkhi-] is represented in Norwegian in a form more like the original, too, in the word ‘arkitekt’ (architect), from Greek ἀρχιτέκτων ([arkhitékton], master builder). The prefix is productive in Norwegian in the form ‘erke-’, in the meaning ‘very’, ‘extremely’.

Such differences as ‘erke-’ versus ‘arki-’ in Norwegian can be explained in various ways. Firstly, the words may have been borrowed in different epochs, and linguistic changes in Norwegian may have affected the one and not the other. Secondly, some loan words may be protected because of their ‘technical’ character – and perhaps ‘arkitekt’ is one of those? Also, it seems likely that only few words have been borrowed directly from the classical languages into Norwegian; the words have traveled through other languages, and in some cases this is visible. For example, ‘møbel’ from Latin *mobilis* means ‘furniture’, and the ‘ø’ reveals that the word has been borrowed through French ‘meuble’. On the other hand, the adjective ‘mobil’ (moveable) has apparently not made the same journey on its way into Norwegian. The suffix *-arius* was borrowed early, in the form ‘-are’ or ‘-ari’, and is first found in a text from the Viking era. This suffix forms *nomina agentis*, and the first example we have in Norwegian is ‘leikarar’ (fiddlers) (Skard 1972, vol. 1, 45).

In my work in the field I have found that studies of the Danish language are a good supplement, particularly Peter Skautrup’s *History of the Danish Language*. The reason for this is of course historical: During the more than 400 years when Norway was ruled by Danish kings (1380–1814), there was a massive linguistic influence from Danish to Norwegian, and words borrowed into Danish often found their way into Norwegian, too. The same is the case with translation loans, as for example the weekdays, from Middle Danish ‘Othæns dagh’ (Wednesday, modern Norwegian ‘onsdag’) (Skautrup 1944, vol. 1, 172).

Among loan words in Norwegian language from Greek and Latin are words for scholarly subjects: *biologi*, *geologi*, *geografi*, *musikk*, *matematikk*, etc. – from Greek, and words related to these subjects from both languages, for example *addére*, *subtrahére*, *multiplisére*, *dividére*,

aritmetikk, geometri, kvadrat, radius, pi. Some of these words are spelled the same way as the original; others have been changed. For example, in 'kvadrat' the initial 'qu' in Latin has been changed into 'kv' in Norwegian, and the stress has been moved in the verbs, as marked. It is a task for Norwegian philology to study and describe the treatment of loan words from the classical languages: spelling, pronunciation and declension.

The field seen from classical philology

As said above, it is the task of the national philologies to study and describe their own language(s), included the loans from the classical languages. But arguably, the national philology cannot give the full picture of Greek and Latin as lenders from antiquity until today. The responsibility of studying how and why Greek and Latin respectively were such preferred lenders into so many languages, and through such a long period of time, should fall on classical philology. The national and classical studies will enrich each other. Observations made on the basis of one specific language can be compared with the situation elsewhere.

It is my opinion that our profession could do more in this field of study. This said, the bibliography below contains some studies – among them my own *Indeed you know Greek and Latin*, written in Norwegian (Roggen 2010; 2012). A colleague from Finland wrote to me about the scarcity of such studies:

Even though I have been collecting and looking for books like yours in Germany, England and Sweden on the background of Graeco-Latin, I confess that I have so far seen nothing like your book. [...] The combination of both of the classical languages is a welcome novelty.
(Sironen 2014)

Also the combination of historical and cultural aspects with linguistic ones are emphasized.

Another aspect that should not be forgotten is the value of such studies for language learning and understanding. The prefixes alone speak for themselves in that respect: how many words that begin with 'com-' (or the adjusted variants 'con-', 'col-', etc.) can we find in English? How many on 'ex-'? Moreover, I think it would be interesting for young people to learn that the meaning of the word 'corruption' is 'complete destruction'. The word itself reveals corrupt leaders who claim to defend their nation and country. And they could proceed to study '-rupt-' in other connections: interrupt: to break in-between; eruption: outbreak; disrupt: to break in parts. Another part of such a basic course could explain that 'epidemy' means something that comes 'on people', from ἐπί [epí, on] and δῆμος [démós, people]. 'Pandemy' has ancient origin, too; πᾶν [pan] means 'all', so a pandemy affects the whole people. 'Metropolitan' is an adjective to 'mother city' – a term that leads us back to the Greek colonization of the coastal areas of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. On the more basic level we could mention that the meaning of 'station' is 'something related to standing'. One could go on indefinitely, but the main point is that there is a lot to gain in this area. Who said that our beloved classical languages are not useful?

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Latin summary

Campum philologiae classicae extendere: De verbis internationalibus. Linguis classicis, id est Graecae atque Latinae, est speciale genus effectūs posterioris, nempe modo earum vehementissimā extentione in *alias* linguas, inde ex antiquitate usque in hodiernum diem. Scopus huius symbolae est in eo, ut conspectus latus huius campi studiorum praebeatur, ita ut monstretur hac in re multa invenienda esse. Exempla selecta sunt linguae Anglica, Hispanica, Norvegica – tres linguae Indo-Europaeae, quibus omnibus est materia ampla ad finem nostrum explicandum. In philologiis nationalibus tractatio elementorum Graecorum Latinorumque non saepe specialiter attenditur, sed eadem iuxta alios aspectūs singularum linguarum investigantur. Cooperatio cum philologiā classicā esset progressus quidam. Insuper tantummodo philologiā classicā tota imago exhiberi potest percepta ex ratione ipsorum sermonum Graeci et Latini, et explicari potest, *cur* et *quomodo* illae linguae tot verba atque elementa verborum assumpserint in tam multos sermones vernaculos. Alius aspectus huius thematis, quod “verba internationalia” nuncupo, est vis maxima, quam illa verba exserunt, si modo bono in populum ipsum disseminantur. Cum ille, qui discit, systematice doceatur, conexūs inter verba videre valebit, nova verba celerius discet et intellectum profundiorum vocabulariorum accipiet – exempli gratiā – in linguis Anglicā, Hispanicā atque Norvegicā.

English summary

The classical languages, Greek and Latin, have a special kind of afterlife, namely through their explosive expansion into *other* languages, from antiquity until today. The aim of the present paper is to give a broad survey of this field of study – enough to show that there is a lot to find. As examples are chosen English, Spanish and Norwegian – three Indo-European languages, all of them with rich material for our purpose. In the national philologies, the treatment of the Greek and Latin elements are often not given special attention, but are studied alongside other aspects of the language in question. A cooperation with classical philology would be an advantage. Moreover, only classical philology can give the full picture, seen from the point of view of Greek and Latin, and explain *why* and *how* these languages have lended so many words and word elements to so many vernacular languages. Another aspect of the field, which I call ‘international words’, is the enormous potential that these words have, if disseminated in a good way to the general population. If taught systematically, the learner will be able to see the connections between words, learn new words faster, and develop a deeper understanding of the vocabularies in – for example – English, Spanish and Norwegian.

Keywords

Loan words, prefixes, suffixes, Greek in modern languages, Latin in modern languages.