

LATIN, GREEK AND ENGLISH BLEND INTO PRESENT- DAY BUSINESS TERMINOLOGY

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ABSTRACT:

The study of the historical sources of the English language provides an appropriate understanding picture of the business English language development. Trade contributed the coining of new language value-addings of the local languages, but Latin and Greek have proved, by far, the most important vocabulary donor in English, from Early Middle Ages till modern times. The present account makes reference to the matter by the historical and anthropological approach which stand proof for the linguistic phenomenon that made business English the lingua franca of the modern-day world trade.

Key words

Business English franca, Latin and Greek source, language development, globalization

The English language is ever-changing, ever-evolving. English language has developed more words than any other language in the world. It is the reason that more people speak English than any other language as it turned into the communication instrument of the global-economic society. Statistics provides synthetic information about the historical sources of improvement of the English language although uncertainties are still prevailing on vocabulary and language structure origins.

An appropriate understanding picture is produced based on anthropological-linguistic¹ research carried out on the stages of business English language development.

Although the geographical discoveries and trade contributed to the coining of new language value-addings of the local languages, Latin and Greek have proved, by far, the most important vocabulary donor in English, from Early Middle Ages stage of language development till modern times.

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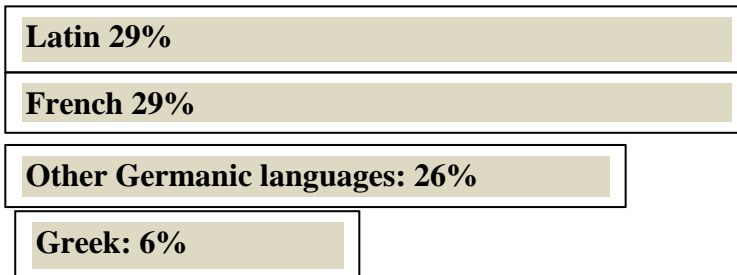
¹Branch of anthropology ; interdisciplinary study of the language and social life; it originates from the endeavor to document endangered languages, and has grown to encompass almost any aspect of language structure and its social implications

The present account makes reference to the matter by the historical, anthropological and linguistic approach which stand proof for the socio-professional phenomenon that made business English *lingua franca* of the modern-day world trade.

Facts and figures

Otto Jespersen², in his book *Growth and Structure of the English Language* names English language as being a “chain of borrowings” from conquerors who were unable to completely impose their languages to the natives of the British isles...

One of the four originals of Magna Carta³, surviving in Salisbury Cathedral, issued in 1215, is a proof of the referential Latin and Greek contribution not only to the formation of the English language, but also to the modern-day business English, as a *lingua franca*. The 63 clauses written in Latin on vellum (calf-skin) contain about 3,500 abbreviated and full Latin words. The following chart shows the estimated percentages of foreign contribution to the English language. It proves the most important contribution is Latin followed by French which is also a Latin origin language⁴. It makes also to understand the linguistic phenomena which that English language passed through: while the vocabulary is mainly based on Latin origin culture and civilization, its grammar structure has developed a Germanic modular structure. The following statistics provides numerical self speaking information on the vocabulary historical sources:



² Jespersen, Otto. *Growth and Structure of the English Language*. 10th ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982

³ Latin for *Great Charter*, also called *Magna Carta Libertatum* or *The Great Charter of the Liberties of England*; originally issued in Latin and translated into vernacular French; the first document forced onto a king of England in an attempt to limit his powers by law and protect the barons' privileges.

⁴ Greenough, James Bradstreet, and George Lyman Kittredge. *Words and Their Ways in English Speech*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962

Other: 10%

From *English* to *Business English franca*

Latin has implemented naturally those characteristics needed by the developing English language making it able to adapt linguistically to the knowledge and understanding of the Roman Empire social and economic standards and consistency. The openness of Latin permitted the infusion of the linguistic and cultural Greek elements before having been imposed as an official language to the native Celts when the Roman Empire conquered the Albion⁵ islands. Nevertheless, the commercial, military and then religious and intellectual contacts with the Roman Empire were carried out long before the Anglo-Saxons invade England. The several hundred Latin words, found in the various Old Germanic languages testify to the relationship of the Germanic peoples with the Roman Empire before their conquest. When Julius Caesar conquered Gaul, the Roman merchants took their way into the Anglo-Saxon territory, even into Scandinavia. The newly adopted words from Latin in Old English and Germanic languages indicate new concepts of social organization and professions that the Germans already acquired from the contact with the Roman civilization of a higher rank. Besides agriculture, their social experience was covered by trade: ambers, furs, slaves and certain raw materials, mainly tin, for the products of Roman handicrafts, articles of utility and adornment became subject of business and linguistic development.

The Anglo-Saxon dictionary was improved with Latin words representing social development, occupational business, town and military organization and war. These are reflected in the Latin vocabulary which was primarily borrowed in Old English for immediate use.

After the Romans abandoned the conquered territory trade continued to be carried on between the Roman Empire and the native inhabitants of the British isles.

The process of language modern stabilization and standardization reached its peak in Renaissance⁶ time when Latin and Greek contribution turned

⁵ *Albion* (ancient Greek: Ἀλβίων); the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain; still used poetically to refer to the island. The name for Scotland in the Celtic languages is related to Albion: *Alba* in Scottish Gaelic, *Albain* in Irish, *Nalbin* in Manx and *Alban* in Welsh/Cornish/Breton. The Latinized name *Albania* and then Anglicized *Albany*, was once alternative names for Scotland. New Albion and Albionoria ("Albion of the North") were suggested as possible names of Canada

⁶ cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period produced mainly due to the fall of Constantinople in 1453; its influence

into a qualitative linguistic phenomenon which set stage for the modern day *English franca* used nowadays by over 60% of the world population as their *official*⁷ or *working language*⁸.

The emergence of modern science and technology in the 18-19th century mainly on the British isles, created an unprecedented demand of terminology that could not be supplied from the native language resources. A clear-cut meaning and an immediate intelligibility of the terminology were needed by both speakers of Romance and Germanic languages alike. English language was again in need of the Greek and Latin lexicon resources when the modern expansion of sciences began to facilitate the interchange and advancement of science.

Soon, the phenomenon of the language development took a further step by its second American stage in the 20th century: the great continuous historical openness and flexibility of the English language for new developments made English a language of “unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding” [Crystal, 1997]

Latin and Greek language sources

was felt in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry and was based on the rediscovery of Greek and Latin culture

⁷ involved in public administration or government; The word has been recorded since the Middle English period, first seen in 1314, originating from Old French (*official*) and Latin (*officialis*)

⁸ also *procedural language*; a language with the formal status of communication instrument, used for the daily correspondence and conversation, negotiations since the organization members originate from various differing language backgrounds

| Word stem | Derived English terms | Romanian | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Latin corpus fraus (<i>genitive</i> <i>corpōris</i>); <i>fraudis</i>; <i>fraudem</i>); <i>f</i>, Latin</p> | <p>frame; body, system, fraud structure, community, corporation; incorporation; corporate</p> | <p><i>frauda</i> <i>corporatie</i>, <i>corpus</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mid 15th century: legally authorized entity: act/process to form a corporate body; (attested 15th century) • the act of founding a corporate body [Ambrose Bierce, 1885] |
| <p>Latin grossus <i>m</i> (<i>feminine</i> <i>grossa</i>, <i>grossa</i> (?) <i>neuter</i> <i>grossum</i>); Ancient Greek μόρφα (<i>morpha</i>, <i>morpha</i>, from French morpe (<i>morphē</i>) <i>morpe</i>)</p> | <p>Gross income conform, conformance, conformant, conformity,</p> | <p>Venit brut μóρφα</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measure of weight equal to one-eighth of a dram (early 15c.) • Sense of "total profit" (opposed to <i>net</i>) is from 1520s • shape, fashion, appearance, outward form, contour, figure |
| <p>Late Latin uniformitatem; formalis; Old French uniformite e; formel Proto-Germanic superlative frumô</p> | <p>formal, formality, informal, informality, information, informative, perform, performance, reform, uniform, uniformity</p> | <p><i>forma</i>, formal, informal, <i>informatie</i>, <i>conformitate</i> , conform</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attested in early 14century) • 1600: (plural) "things that are formal |
| <p>Latin fiscus (<i>fisci</i>; <i>fiscalis</i>); <i>m</i>, Middle French</p> | <p>Money basket made of twigs, purse, treasury (<i>public</i> <i>treasury</i>); confiscate</p> | <p>Fisc; fiscal; <i>confisca</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pertaining to public revenue; • belonging to the state treasury (1550) |

The awareness of vocabulary etymological sources makes *business English franca* communication and information effective. The search for the Latin and Greek sources of the specific business vocabulary makes language competence contribute to the career successfulness and professional domain development. It is also the search for the vocabulary similarities in the native language that contribute to the development of the native applied language and to the domain itself.

Exploitation of classical Latin and Greek lexical items occasioned the manufacture of a great number of business English vocabulary. The following samples will show the corresponding etymological development of specific business vocabulary family from Latin and Greek. They also stand proof for the same origin and linguistic history of Romanian language. The annex makes reference only to the business vocabulary derived from Latin and Greek and their supposed etymological stories. The development of communicative competence, articulated with the direct access to knowledge and understanding make part of the linguistic political strategies for the competitive selection of human resources and against brain drain and contributes to the “key European values of democracy, equality, transparency and competitiveness”.⁹

Latin and Greek origin vocabulary in Business English

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⁹ Eurobarometer report – Europeans and their languages , February, 2006

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