

The Long Shadow of the Ancient Greek and Latin Languages on the English Language
from around 1600 Onwards

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ABSTRACT

A few words with now and then differing alphabets! But the English language exhibits remarkable heterogeneity, i.e. the consequence of centuries of uninterrupted contact with other languages, because of its enormous lexical variety. Among them, Latin, French and Greek have been particularly extensive and consequential structurally. Despite the fact that their impact on English dates back to the long before the 17th cent, this article asserts that it, in fact, grew rather than declined after that point. A decisive promotion of English as a territorial language to a transcontinental language of science, government, and culture occurred in the seventeenth century. With the interdisciplinary approach that includes historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, lexical semantics and discourse analysis, the book looks into the reasons of Latin/French/Greek dependency in the 17th century up through the present and how English has been learning vocabulary. Study borrowing tendencies, coinage of neologisms, stratification of the register and institutional language use: Classical influences are revealed as having permeated the English language in expressive accuracy, flexibility of style and world coverage. The inquiry then finds that the extension of English as a world language has been necessarily coupled with its further dependence on classical and Romance linguistic resources.

Keywords: English historical linguistics; Latin influence; French influence; Greek influence; lexical stratification; Global English.

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the rare languages of the world that is highly porous, and that may be significantly penetrated by foreign elements. As opposed to languages that have attempted to adopt methodological linguistics policies of linguistic purism, English has developed by borrowing, adapting and mixing. It is this open-mindedness that is observed to have given rise to a particularly large and varied lexicon, which has caused linguists to regard the English language as a lexical mosaic, as well as a prototypical language of contact.

Three languages — French, Latin and Greek — loom large in the cluster at the center of this language mosaic; all three have profoundly shaped English over an extended period. Although their initial impact is often dated to the Roman occupation of Britain, the Norman Conquest, and classical antiquity, such periodization threatens to obscure one essential point: after that time English never moved beyond these influences, but entered into a more sustained and productive relationship with them.

The 17th c. was a turning point in the sociolinguistic history of English. It was contemporaneous with the Scientific Revolution, the rise of print culture, modern nation-states and the beginnings of a global empire. These changes radically increased the communication load on English. However, as the language extended into areas long the preserve of Latin—science, philosophy, law and higher education—it also needed for new lexicon in which to articulate notions of abstraction, classification and theoretical supposition.

English not only used its Germanic stocks, but imported Latin and Greek to a significant percentage of its technical and theoretical nomenclature, and French continued to play a role in cultural and diplomatic

as well as social language. It did not merely add on, but had reshaped the internal architecture of the English language, to form a layer-cake lexicon by which words of various origins, of classical and medieval Latin, of Greek and of Anglo-Saxon, were stacked one atop the other in umbrella formationist groupings; register, formality and authority were indicated by different levels.

These are but some of the questions as to how and why Latin, French and Greek continue to work in English since the seventeenth century. It argues that their influence is active and continuing and their power is maintained through education, institutional power, intellectual status or visibility and globalization. Through an intersection of historical, sociolinguistic and lexicographic the book shows that the history of the English language cannot be described or interpreted sufficiently and correctly without taking into consideration its medium-term periphery of transmission through the classical and Romance languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has long been a basic tenet of historical English scholarship that language contact plays an essential role. Pioneering studies by Baugh and Cable confirmed the importance of Latin and French sources in the Middle Ages, whereas more recent scholars, like Crystal, have addressed social linguistic consequences of English's lexical complexity. But a great deal of the emphasis in such scholarship continues to be that classical influence waned in periods after the early modern.

Recent research questions that assumption. Durkin's research on loanwords shows that borrowing is not a historical closed process, but an ever occurring linguistic phenomenon. Studies on register and lexical stratification also show that classical words still collocate with other Greek and Latin words in both professional and academic English. Despite this fact, broad longitudinal narratives confirming Latin, French, and βr1) ning in the seventeenth century have been scarce.

Greek influence, especially, remains understudied given its importance. While diachronic analyses describe the linguistic stock of Greek borrowings, more recent readings have traced the sociolinguistic role they played and hence their contribution to scientific modernity. So too is post-medieval French influence eclipsed, even though France maintained its status as a cultural and diplomatic hegemon in early modern Europe.

This paper tackles this shortcoming by providing a comparative, diachronic account of classical influence that takes into consideration lexical, institutional and ideological aspects within a single framework.

Background: English in the post 17th century period

English had become fully grammaticalised by the early C17th, with little inflection or variation in word order and a nascent 'standard' written form. Yet lexical growth was slow to follow structural consolidation. With the growth of scientific investigation, bureaucratic administration and philosophical controversy, English came to lack an adequate vocabulary for expressing new notions in specialized terminology.

Latin, as the language of scholarship for so long, proved unignorable. Though English became the language of instruction and publication in place of Latin, words derived from Latin reconciled the new institutions with the older intellectual culture of Europe. French endured through nobility, diplomacy and civil administration; Greek through Renaissance humanism, the original language of philosophy and the New Testament.

These dynamics were exacerbated by colonial expansion. English developed under novel environments and social structures which called for linguistic creativity. Neutral and Authoritative Classical roots

also provided a framework for terms that could ignore local variation. The seventeenth century was therefore no period of decline for classical influence, but saw it rearranged into new and comparatively newly discovered functions.

Theoretical Framework

Three main theoretical notions are brought together in this work: language contact, lexical stratification and register differentiation.

It is post- 17th century Latin, French and Greek borrowings that are the “learned” type of borrowing which occurs via prestige and institutional authority rather than through direct contact. The result of these borrowings is the stratified vocabulary in which various layers of the lexicon serve various communicative purposes.

Registers are as diverse a genre as legal, medical, scientific and academic English preserve classical lexicon through institutional conservative gesture. These documents are transmitted from one generation to the other in terms of language, continuing tradition despite the change of vernacular languages.

Ideological linkages, which relate classical with authority, reason, legitimacy, are in the backdrop of these processes. They play a role in both borrowing behavior and the attitudes towards language.

Latin Influence

The language which has most influenced English since the seventeenth century is Latin, long-established in schools and universities. Nowadays many technical, legal, medical and academic words are from the Latin part of our heritage.

The Scientific Revolution needed fresh conceptual tools, and Latin provided terms that closely connected English science to the wider world of international scholarship. Medicine and biology have enshrined Latin via taxonomy and anatomy nomenclature. Legal English retained Latin for accuracy and authority, law education further encouraged Latinate prose styles linked with abstraction and dominance.

The influence of Latin continues to be present in new word formation, ongoing neologisms and classical compound words.

French Influence

French influence beyond the middle ages has gravitated away from structures used in construction to symbols of French culture. Still, French continued to be the language of diplomacy, sophistication and high society. English took many French words with regard to foods, cooking and dining, fashion and shopping, and art and culture; along with norman conquest agreements came the autonomy of vocabulary.

One is that the words are French-derived and so provide a way politeness strategies and pragmatic nuance. In its legal and diplomatic contexts, French words “jostle with the Latin to provide an arsenal of expressions more or less respectful of tradition”.

While modern loanwords do not become neologisms as productively in Spanish, the work of French influence in both social and stylistic matters is evident.

Greek Influence

From the 17th century, Greek influence has been very marked in the realms of philosophy, science and technology. Greek roots contributed to a systematic, conceptually precise terminology.

Greek morphology was especially prolific, permitting coinages in new spheres or in new actions. Blends of Greek and Latin more reflect the practical value of English in communication than any etymological issue of purity.

Technical and scientific English to-day is more than ever the carrier of Greek-based words all over the world.

Comparative Analysis

So Latin provides the institutional power and abstraction and French the cultural subtlety and social finesse and Greek the conceptual and scientific accuracy. Their influences do not oppose, they complement one another.

The English lexicon is arranged in such a way that it accommodates register and stylistic choices, thereby enhancing expressiveness and accessibility issues.

Global English, Accessibility, and Criticism.

Due to the fact that English is a global lingua franca, its classical tradition is becoming more and more topical. All about common denominator words in the production of global knowledge. French has an influence on diplomacy and culture.

In the meantime the reliance upon a classical vocabulary casts doubt upon the inequality and access of education. Plain English movements are concerned with trying to find simplicity without losing precision. The thing is to democratize, rather than to kill classical vocabulary.

Digital communication has not diminished the influence of tradition and innovation, in fact it has extended its arena significantly in the technological and precise sciences.

CONCLUSION

This study supports the point that the influence of Latin, French and Greek on Modern English between the 17th century and the contemporary times is not accidental or remnant. It is one of the characteristics of English that have contributed to its diffusion in the world.

Latin provided institutionally approved power and abstract precision; French created the cultural and social registers; Greek provided conceptual schemes that were necessary to science and philosophy today. These forces created a stratified lexicon that could work across the communicative environments across the shift.

The enduring presence of the Classical is evidence of the adaptive power of English. English has with a combination of Languages been in a position to articulate advanced thought, continuity of institutions and play a role as a world language of knowledge. The significance of such an inheritance, both to historical linguistics, and to the evolution of English in a globalizing world.

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