GREEK AND LATIN LOAN WORDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(TENDENCIES OF EVOLUTION)

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The English language has a great number of words. Many of the words in English are based on Greek and Latin roots. A great deal of the terminology of science and medicine and indeed much of the vocabulary of higher education is based on Latin and Greek roots. These roots are dependable and unchanging and serve as the key to understanding the vocabulary of English and many of the modern European Languages. These words were borrowed in different periods and for different purposes. Most of these loan-words form the main bulk of the words for science, medicine, art, technology, etc. According to the periods of borrowing loan-words have undergone several changes that were common for English language itself during the centuries. These changes have influenced the loan-words and changed their semantic, structural or more or less morphological meaning, even their phonetic appearance. Later, loan-words were assimilated with the native English words and were acknowledged as pure English ones without taking into account their etymology. Etymologically OE vocabulary is extremely homogeneous, especially if compared with present-day English. Contacts with other languages in the Pre-OE or OE periods have left traces, which provide interesting insights into the external history of the language as they reflect cultural, religious and political changes. The largest number of loans, whether direct or indirect (semantic loans, loan translations) in OE is due to the influence of Latin. Independently it could have acted as an intermediary for the adoption of some loans from Greek. Greek words have entered the English Language from a different direction. They came via French, while others were borrowed directly; especially those in the fields of science and technology, and are seen in such compound words as telephone, photography, microscope, etc.

Keywords: Word borrowing, English language history, Latin loan words, Greek loan words.

INTRODUCTION

Three languages have contributed such extensive shares to the English word-stock as to deserve particular attention. These are Greek, Latin and French. By comparison together they account for so overwhelming proportion of the borrowed elements in the English vocabulary that the rest of it seems insignificant. It is difficult and sometimes even impossible to determine the direct source of borrowing, as Greek words are Latinized in form before they are made English, and Latin words – Gallicized. Thus, texture borrowed directly from Latin, looks to be borrowed from French texture rather than Latin texture. The same can be said about figure; the word is borrowed rather from Latin figura directly than from French figure, though its direct source is
doubtful. Also the same case have we with the coinage **telegraph** – direct borrowing from Greek *tele* (far) and *gráphо* (write), which seem to come rather from French *telegaph*, than the Latin *telegraphus*. **Theatre** – is a Greek word which was borrowed by Romans, and then from Latin it went into French and like chain it entered English. The spelling itself suggests that the word is French. Gr.thèātron → L.theātrum → OF. T(h)eater → OE. theater.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In the First century B.C. most of the territory now known to us as Europe was occupied by the Roman Empire. Among the inhabitants of the Europe are Germanic tribes. Their stage of development was rather primitive, especially if compared with the high civilization of Rome. They are primitive cattle-breeders and knew almost nothing about land cultivation. Their tribal languages contain only Indo-European and Germanic elements.

Due to Roman invasion Germanic tribes had to come into contact with Romans. The “early “loan-words were borrowed in the Roman and sub-Roman period. They reflect the superiority of the Roman civilization and mainly denote concrete things of everyday life adopted from the Romans. They built roads, bridges, military camps. Trade is carried on, and the Germanic people gain knowledge of new and useful things. The first among them are new things to eat. The only products that from cattle-breeding were known to Germanic tribes were meat and milk. It is from the Romans that they learned how to make butter and cheese and as there were naturally no words for these food products in their tribal languages, they had to use the *Latin Words* to name them. (Lat. butirum, caseus). It is also to the Romans that the Germanic tribes owe the knowledge of some new fruits and vegetables entered their vocabularies: cherry (Lat. cerasum), pear (Lat. pirum), plum (Lat. prunus), pea (Lat. pisum), beet (Lat. beta), pepper (Lat. piper), cup (Lat. cuppa), kitchen (Lat. coquina), mill (Lat. molina), port (Lat. portus), wine (Lat. vinum).

The Germanic tribal languages gained a considerable number of new words and were thus enriched.

Latin words presented the earliest group of borrowings in the developing English language that was later built on the basis of the Germanic tribal languages.

In the fifth century A.D. several of Germanic tribes: The Angles, The Saxons and the Jutes migrated from the continent across the sea to the British Isles. Their tribal languages by the time of migration contained only words of Indo-European and Germanic roots along with a certain number of the earliest Latin borrowings. Indo-European word stock consisted of the notions denoting elementary concepts without which no human communication would be possible: Father, mother, son, daughter, day, night, new, red, cow, goose, sun, moon, foot, nose, heart, etc. As for the Germanic element, it represented the words mostly common to all Germanic languages: sea, land, bear, arm, hand, bone, calf, winter, spring, room, green, blue, ship, boat, drink, give say, etc. Though the local inhabitants of the isles were the Celts who defended their lands from the new comers they gradually yielded most of their territory and retreated to the North and South-West (Scotland, Wales, Cornwall). Through the contacts with the defeated Celts, the conquerors borrowed a number of purely Celtic words (bald, down, glen, bard, cradle), especially numerous were the words denoting place names, names of rivers, hills, etc. At the same time they met the traces of the long Roman rule and acquired a lot of new Latin words from the Celts. Though the Germanic tribes occupied the land the names of that places were remained Celtic. So the names of rivers Avon, Exe, Esk, Usk, Ux originally means Celtic river or water.
Sixth century A.D. (597 A.D.) was very significant because of the Christianization of England. Early Christian loan-words comprise the basic Christian vocabulary indispensable to the proper working of ecclesiastical structures and service. The establishment of Roman Catholic seat at Canterbury brought to the Island a considerably larger number of Latin words, not only such clerical ones as alter, angel, apostle, bishop, monk, mass, etc. So Latin became the official language of the Christian church and consequently the spread of Christianity was accompanied by a new active period of Latin borrowings. These loans came from church Latin and not from spoken one as it happened before, eight centuries earlier. Newly borrowed Latin words were different in meaning from the earlier ones. They mostly indicated persons, objects and ideas associated with church and religious services: priest (Lat. presbyter), bishop (Lat. episcopus), monk (Lat. monachus), nun (Lat. nonna), candle (Lat. candela), etc. It became quite natural that educational terms were also borrowed from Latin, as the first schools were opened at churches and first teachers were priests and monks. The words school and magister are Latin borrowings (Lat. schola, Gr. Lat. magister).

From the end of the eighth century to the middle of the eleventh century England underwent several Scandinavian invasions that did not go without traces. Call, die, cast, take, window, law, husband, ill, low, weak, loose, Some of Scandinavian borrowings are easily recognizable by initial **sk** in their spelling: skill, sky, skirt, ski, skin. Certain English words changed their semantic meanings under the influence of Scandinavian words of the same root. So the old English “bread” meaning “piece” acquired its modern meaning by association with the Scandinavian “brød”. The old English “dream” meaning joy assimilated the meaning of the Scandinavian “dram”. With the famous Battle of Hastings, when the English were defeated by the Normans under William the Conqueror, the epoch of the Norman Conquest began. The development and the culture of the Norman in the eleventh century was superior to that of the Saxons. In the result English vocabulary adopted great number of French words that were originated mostly again from Latin. But instead of being smashed and broken by the powerful intrusion of very strong foreign element, the English language managed to survive and preserve its essential structure and vastly enriched its verbal expressive resources with the new borrowings. In this period English became a bilingual country, and the impact on the English vocabulary made over this two-hundred-years French dominancy is immense: French words from the Norman dialect penetrated the whole social life. Thus we have the words of Norman-French borrowings denoting:

**Administrative words:** state, government, parliament, council, power.
**Legal terms:** court, judge, justice, crime, prison.
**Military terms:** army, was, soldier, officer, battle, enemy.
**Educational terms:** pupil, lesson, library, science, pen, pencil.
**Terms of everyday life:** autumn, dinner, table, uncle, plate, river.

After the Norman Conquest many of the French really expected their language to become general throughout the whole country, bush such a thing could simply not happen, since French never reached the ordinary people of the lower or artisan classes. Many of the borrowings from the French vocabulary on the English one itself seem natural enough. Middle English became the period of drastic changes and fights for establishing the English as canonical language.

In England, as in all European countries the period of Renaissance is marked by significant developments in science, culture and arts, and what also makes the period most important, by a revival of the interests in the antique civilizations of Greece and Rome, their languages and
cultures. Hence the new wave of borrowings from these languages reached English. In contrast to the earliest Latin borrowings the Renaissance ones were rarely concrete names or abstract notions: intelligent, moderate, permanent, major, minor. There also were lots of scientific and art terms: datum, status, phenomenon, music, method, philosophy. Numerous words were borrowed in English from Latin that had earlier come into Latin from Greek. Independently Latin could have acted as an intermediary for the adoption of some loans from Greek. Into English they came via French, while others were borrowed directly; especially those in the fields of science and technology, and are seen in such compound words as telephone, photography, microscope, etc.

The Renaissance was a period of integrated and extensive cultural contacts between European states. Therefore it’s natural that new words could have entered English language from other European Languages as well. The most significant are the loans from the Parisian dialect of French, known as Parisian borrowings: ballet, technique, scene, routine, bourgeois, matinee, they preserved their French spelling and pronunciation. Some of them have Latin origins. Italian another Latin-based language contributed a considerable number of words to English: piano, violin, colonel, opera, alarm. The sixteenth century, the period of Renaissance, was a period of increased activity in almost every field not only on the British Isles, but in the whole Europe. England was becoming the part of a rapidly expanding civilization. The rediscovery of classical Latin and Greek literature led to new activity in the modern languages and directed the attention to them as the medium of the literary expression. The same attention was paid to the revival of learning, through which the monopoly of Latin was completely destroyed, but the incompleteness of the English language on that stage in comparison with classical languages was revealed. Translations of the Greek and Latin authors were printed in great numbers. New translations were needed. Translators were framed with the limits of incompleteness of English and faced the necessity of borrowing non existed strata from the original languages. Translators were by no means learned men, for whom Latin was the second mother tongue, and so for them transferring, naturalizing or assimilating in English necessary Latin units was easy. In that way great numbers of foreign words were introduced into English. New words were eventually necessary in various technical fields, where English was evidently weak. In “A History of English Language” the authors, A. Baugh and T. Cable, call such words “inkhorn terms,” the introduction of which for some period was opposed by some of the learned men as well. But such opposition appeared to be of course for a while, as the strangeness of the new words was soon to wear off, and these words freely occupied assigned places in the word-stock of the English vocabulary. Among the learned words and terminology foreign element dominates over the native.

As modern scholars estimate the percentage of borrowed words in English word stock at 65-70% the figure is really unexpectedly very high and means that the native element does not prevail. This is explained by the eventful and troubled history and by its mutual international relationships. Because of the high percentage of loan words, one can undoubtedly classify English as a language of international origin, or rat least of Romance one, as the words of French and Latin origin dominate over others. But another very strong and significant factor comes into the point: the native element, that in English is comprised by the large number of high-frequency words, like articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliaries and also lots of words denoting everyday objects, concepts and ideas: house, water, go, come, eat, bad, good, child. Moreover, English language preserved essential Germanic grammatical structure that remained unaffected by any foreign influence during the centuries. Here also should be mentioned that the pure English proper element is opposed to the Indo-European and Germanic element. These words can not only be approximately dated, but they always had distinctive function as well:
they are specifically English and have no cognates in other languages; as for the Indo-European and Germanic words such cognates can always be found.

E.g.: E. Star-Germ.-Stern, Lat.-Stella, Gr.-aster.
E. Stand-Germ.-Stehen, Lat.-stare, R.-стоять

Bird, lady, lord, boy, girl always daisy, woman are the samples of purely English proper words.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF BORROWINGS

Some of the certain structural features enable us to distinguish and identify some of the words as loans and according to their appearance determine the donor source language. Initial sk- as for the words with Scandinavian origin, certain suffixes, prefixes or endings for the words of Latin and French origin:

Latin affixes for nouns: suffix – ion: legion, opinion
- tion: relation, temptation
For verbs: suffix: - ate: appreciate, create, congratulate
- ute: attribute, distribute
- -ct, remnant suffix\(^1\) that is partly preserved in the structure of the word: act, collect, conduct
Prefix: -dis: disable, disagree
For adjectives:
Suffix: -able: disable, curable
- ant: constant, important
- ent: absent, evident
- -or: major, senior
- al: solar, familiar

French affixes of nouns:
The suffix: - ance: endurance, hindrance
- ence: consequence, patience
- ment: appointment, development
- age: courage, marriage, village
- ess: actress, aventuress

For verbs:
The prefix: en-: enable, enact, enslave
For adjectives:
The suffix: -ous: curious, dangerous

It’s important to note here, later the language experienced the practice of word building were both the native element and the borrowed affix is involved. E.g.: eatable, lovable, etc.

\(^1\) Lat. cuts > Lat. -ct
THE REASONS FOR BORROWINGS

Sometimes the language borrows a word from a donor language to fill the gap in the recipient vocabulary. In older times when the Saxons borrowed Latin words for denoting butter, cheese, plum or beet, they did it simply because Saxon vocabulary lacked the words for these new for them notions. For the same reasons potato or tomato were adopted from Spanish as these vegetables were brought to England by Spaniards.

But there are also some words that were borrowed for other reasons they supplied a new shadow of meaning or a different coloring though it represents the same concept. This type of borrowing widens the group of synonyms and presents the expressive resources of the vocabulary. So Latin cordial was added to native friendly, admire to like, French desire to wish, admire to love.

The historical events, political circumstances provoked the process of borrowings, as two nation established closer contacts not only on political or social stages but on lingual stages as well. i.e.: loan words transferred into another language via invasions, conquest or trade and international cultural relations during the peaceful period.

While migrating from one language into another they try to assimilate with the recipient language by adjusting themselves to the new requirements and norms. They undergo several changes, that loses their foreign origin and acquires native nature and become unrecognizable without taking their etymology into account. It may even seem unbelievable that cat, dinner, cup, take are not English. Some others though well assimilated with English, still bear differentiating features: sky, skill, skin as Scandinavian element or police and regime with the stress on the last syllable.

Loan words are adjusted in the tree main areas of the new language system: phonetic, grammatical and semantic.

The sample of phonetic adaptation is well demonstrated by comparing Norman borrowings to comparatively later Parisian ones. Some Norman loan words have completely adapted to the phonetic system of English. As table, plate, courage, chivalry, bear no phonetic traces of their French origin. Though some earlier loans of the 15th century still convey their French pronunciation like regime, valise, matinee, café, ballet. In these cases we can doubt that phonetic adaptation is not complete.

Grammatical adaptation is presented by a complete change of the former paradigm of the borrowed word. If it is a noun, therefore it is certain to adopt a new system of declension; if it is a verb, it will be conjugated according to the existed rules of the recipient language. Even today, the process is not completed. e.g: Russian coat пальто borrowed from French early in the 19th century has not yet acquired the Russian system of declension. The same can be said about such English words that were borrowed as early as the Renaissance, but their grammatical form of the plural forms still remains as in the donor language. Datum- pl. data, criterion- pl. criteria, phenomenon - pl. phenomena and form an exceptional paradigm of forming plural in English.

Semantic adaptation is presented by the adjustment to the system of meanings of the vocabulary. In some cases a word was “blindly” borrowed with no reasons, as there was no gap in the recipient vocabulary nor in the group of synonyms that it could fill. Some of these “accidental” borrowings were rejected and soon forgotten. But some of these words managed to survive and managed to establish itself through the process of semantic adaptation. E.g.: large is a loan from French in the meaning of wide. It was not actually wanted as there was English adjective wide and as it did not convey any additional shade in meaning it could have been led to rejection. It survived in English by semantic adjustment and entered another synonymic group
with the meaning of large in size and is successfully completing the idea of big, both in usage frequency and meanings.

INTERNATIONAL WORDS

It is a common case that a word is borrowed by several languages and not by one. Such words prove that they convey significant concepts in the field of communication. Still most of them are of Latin or Greek origin.

Thus most names of sciences are international: philosophy, mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, lexicology, linguistics. Numerous art terms: tragedy, comedy, artist, music, theatre, primadonna. Sport terms: football, tennis, golf. Political terms float from one language to another: politics, policy, revolution, democracy, anti-militarism. The twentieth century technological terms are considered as international borrowings: atomic, radio, television. Here we have to mention that English son, German Sohn and Russian сын are not borrowed words, but they represent the Indo-European group of the same etymological root and not borrowings.

Etymological doublets are originating from the same etymological source, but differing in phonemic shape and meaning.

They entered the vocabulary from different sources. Such pairs are represented by native and borrowed words: Shrew-n. E. and screw-n.Sc. Or both words from different languages: canal-Lat. And channel- Fr; captain-L. and chieftain-Fr. Some others were borrowed from one and the same language but in different periods: travel-Norm. Fr and travail –Par.Fr. cavalry-Norm. Fr. and chivalry-Par.Fr. In some cases a doublet may also be presented by a shortened word and the one from which it was derived: history-story, fantasy-fancy, defence-fence, shadow-shade.

Along the doublets, there are etymological triplets: hospital (L)-hostel(Norm. Fr.) – hotel (Par. Fr.)

Another group of borrowed words is a group of translation-loans. They are not taken into the vocabulary of another language more or less in the same phonemic shape in which they have been functioning in their own language, but underwent the process of translation. Obviously these kinds of words are compounds and were translated separately.

Among the learned words and terminology foreign element dominates over the native.

All in all the English Language has an enormous number of loan-words – no matter what method we use to count them. Many English words are based on Greek and Latin roots. A great deal of the terminology of science and medicine, and indeed much of the vocabulary of all disciplines and branches of learning, has its origins in Greek and Latin.

These ancient root words are dependable and unchanging and serve as the key to understanding not only the vocabulary of English but many of the modern European Languages as well. An understanding of the core meaning of each root can provide a tool for unlocking the meaning of thousands of Greek and Latin-based words in many languages.

THE WORDS WITH AFFIXES OF GREEK, LATIN AND FRENCH ORIGINS

From Greek nouns:

anemo- (Gk. anemos “wind”): anemograph, anemometer, anemoscope
antho- (Gk. anthos “flower”): anthalogy, anthochlorin, anthogenetic, anthophagous
anthropo- (Gk. anthropos “man”): anthropology, anthropography, anthropomorphic,
anthropophagy, anthropoid

bio- (Gk. bios “way of life”): biochemistry, biogenesis, biograph, biography, biology, bionomics, bioscope

broncho- (Gk. brogkos “windpipe”): bronchocele, bronchoplegia, bronchopulmonary, bronchopneumonia bronchitis

cephalo- (Gk. kephalē “head”): cephalocaudal, cephalofacial, cephal mancy, cephalopod, cephaloptera, cephalothorax

chboro- (Gk. khlōros “light green”): chloroform, chlorophyll, chlorophane; chlorate, chlortine, chlorosis

chrono- (Gk. khronos “time”): chronogram, chronoisoterm, chronology, chronometer, chronopher, chronothermal

geo- (Gk. geō “earth”): geodesy, geognosy, geography, geology, geomancy, geometry, geophone, geophysics, geotropic

helio- (Gk. hēlios “sun”): heliocentric, heliochromy, heliograph, heliometer, heliostat, heliotherapy, heliotrope, heliotypy

hydro- (Gk. hudr- “water”): hydrocarbon, hydrocephalic, hydrochloric, hydrogen, hydrology, hydrometer, hydroopathy, hydrophobia, hydroplane, hydrostatic

litho- (Gk. lithos “stone”): lithocarp, lithochromatic, lithochrome, lithogenous, lithography, lithomancy, lithophyte, lithotomy

logo- (Gk. logos “word”): logocyclic, logodaedaly, logograph, logomachia, logomancy, logonomy, logotype

neuro- (Gr. neuron “nerve”): neurology, neuropathic, neurosis

phisio- (Gk. phusis “nature”): the y in this and other words of Greek origin is a Latin spelling of Greek u): physiognomy, phisiography, phisiology

From Greek adjectives:

acro- (Gk. akros “topmost, extreme”): acrocephalic, acrolith, acromegaly, acropolis

aero- (Gk. aeros “of air”): aerodrome, aerodynamics, aeronaut, aerophone, aerophyte, aeroplane, aerostat

archaeo- (Gk. arkhais “ancient”): archaeology, arcaemonus, archaeopteryx

auto- (Gk. autos “same, self”): autobiography, autochthon, autocracy, autograph, automatic, autonomy, automobile (the second element here is Latin), autotoxin, autotype

caco- (Gk. kakos “bad, evil”): cacodyls, cacoepy, cacoethes, cacography, cacophony

eu- (Gk. eu “well”): eucalyptus, eudemonics, euhemerism, eulogy, euphemism, euphrasy, euphuism, eurhythmics

hemi- (Gk. hēmi- “half”): hemicycle, hemipterous, hemispheric, hemistich

hetero- (Gk. heteros “different”): heterodox, heterodyne, heterogeneous, heteromorphic, heteronomy

holo- (Gk. holos “whole, entire”): holocarp, holocaust, holograph, holophote, holospheric

homo- (Gk. homos “same”): homoblastic, homodont, homogeneous, homograph, homology, homonym, homophone

idio- (Gk. idios “private, personal”): idiomatic, idiomorphic, idiopathic, idiosyncrasy

iso- (Gk. isos “equal”): isobar, isoclinic, isogonic, isopod, isotherm

macro- (Gk. makros “long”): macrobiosis, macrocosm, macrocephallic, macrocranial,
Greek and Latin Loan Words in English Language (Tendencies of Evolution)

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-ct, remnant suffix that is partly preserved in the structure of the word: act, collect, conduct
Prefix: -dis: disable, disagree
For adjectives:
Suffix: -able: disable, curable
- ant: constant, important
- ent: absent, evident
- -or: major, senior
- al: solar, familiar
French affixes of nouns:
The suffix: -ance: endurance, hindrance
- ence: consequence, patience
- ment: appointment, development
- age: courage, marriage, village ess: actress, adventuress
- ess: actress, adventuress
For verbs:
The prefix: en-: enable, enact, enslave
For adjectives:
The suffix: -ous: curious, dangerous

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