

Occidentalism and Latin Language: The Lingua Franca of Knowledge

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Abstract

The Western Civilization has contributed so much effort to academic realm. However, the focus of contribution is mainly to the general process of knowledge construction without looking particularly into important aspects of it. This article examines the use of Latin Language in three disciplines, science, social science and humanities. This study adopts three strategies to investigate the use of The Latin language in three major disciplines; the Latin course, material collection and content analysis. The use of Latin in Science (zoology and botany), Law, Philosophy and Writing has shown a very significant role in order to assist the process of knowledge construction. The analyses show that Latin supports the knowledge construction process and it does help to assist the expansion of knowledge that is based on Western Civilization.

Keywords: Occidentalism, Greek, Rome, Latin

1. Introduction

Occidentalism is a concept that refers to the study of Europe and European's civilization, within and outside Europe, otherwise also known as 'the West.' Its scope encompasses aspects related to community life such as culture, architecture, politics, economics, history, philosophy, theology, and so forth. It is an accepted fact that European civilization is the youngest and yet recognized as the most advanced in the world. The contents of European civilization integrated elements from older civilizations, such as Chinese, Indian and Islamic civilizations. It is argued that the incorporation of elements from those civilizations has enriched European civilization, both in terms of tangible and intangible aspects.

In the context of knowledge construction, European civilization has made a major contribution to global academic and intellectual community through the construction and the introduction of various concepts, theories, approaches, and methodologies that have been accepted and used worldwide as a result of the adoption of European education system and research, albeit through colonialism, by many countries in the world's continents. At the same time, knowledge construction began long before European domination of the world, initiated during the Greek and Roman civilizations. The Greek and Roman have contributed much effort to the Western Civilization. Its impact has been influenced throughout the world. Art, poetry, music and architecture are all elements which have panned all over Europe and America. However, all of the elements will not have spread without communication that acts as the medium. This will refer to the use of Ancient Greek and Latin language.

Ancient Greek Language is An Indo-European language spoken primarily in Greece. It has a long and well documented history, the longest of any Indo-European language spanning 34 centuries. There is an ancient phase, subdivided into a Mycenaean period (texts in syllabic script attested from the 14th to the 13th century BC) and Archaic and Classical periods (beginning with the adoption of the alphabet, from the 8th to the 4th century BC); a Hellenistic and Roman phase (4th century BC to 4th century AD); a Byzantine phase (5th to 15th century AD); and a Modern phase (Encyclopedia Britannica 2010). Latin language has survived in one form or another for

over 2,000 years. It is both the cognate and parent of many modern languages (Garger, 2012). According to Garger, Latin can be broken down into seven periods with approximate dates; Old Latin (origin – 75 B.C.), Classical Latin (75 B.C.E. – 200 A.D.), Vulgar Latin (200 – 900), Medieval Latin (900 – 1300), Renaissance Latin (1300 to 1500), New Latin (1500 – Present), and Contemporary Latin (1900 – Present). Latin originated in ancient Rome, but gradually, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the only people who spoke Latin were the Roman Catholic Church, who held on to some of the basic principles of the original Latin and yet conformed it to their own purposes so much that it is almost a different language than that of its original form. It is most certainly a different dialect, and much of the original vocabulary was lost because it was deemed too vulgar. What is generally taught in schools today is Classical Latin, also known as the colloquial Latin of the upper-class Roman people.

This article examines the used of The Latin Language in three of the disciplines in academics, science, social science and humanities. For almost two thousand years, up to the end of the seventeenth century, scientific textbooks were written in Latin. Until the present, Latin has been used as a scientific name to categorized plants and animals all around the world. These would involve the fields of botany and zoology in science. Plants such as *mimosa pudica* (sensitive plant), *musa acuminata* (banana), *malvaceae* (hibiscus), *orchidaceae* (orchid), and animals, *felis* (cat), *canines* (dog), *elaphanti* (elephant), *formica* (ant) have been widely used in order to categorize the scientific names of plant and animal. The terms *flora* and *fauna* which refers to plant and animal are also words inherited from Latin Language. In other disciplines such as philosophy and law, the used of Latin is still present until the present. In law for example, terms such as *affidavit* (declaration upon oath), *prima facie* (first sight), *habeas corpus* (a document or instruction which directs a person to produce someone held in custody before the court; legal action to seek relief from unlawful detention) has been used in court as important terms. In philosophy, some of Latin words, proverbs and phrases are also used in teaching and describing scholars and intellectual thoughts. These include *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am – philosophical Latin statement by Rene Descartes), *tabula rasa* (blank slate - is the epistemological theory that individuals are born without built-in mental content and that their knowledge comes from experience and perception) and many more. In writing document, Latin words are always used to define, restate, or paraphrase the clause immediately preceding it (Elliott 2009). For example “*et al.*” (*et alii*) means others, “*etc.*” (*et cetera*) means so forth, “*eg.*” (*exempli gratia*) means for example are all short forms which has been widely used in writing academic and non-academic books, articles, record and so on.

2. Literature Review

This study has been motivated by three researchers who have explored the used of Latin in other fields of academic. Collins (2012) has examined the English system of pronouncing Latin, and the collapse of that system in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He also includes a short review of the history of the pronunciation of Latin in Britain from the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century; a review of the rules and historical development of the English system, in the form it reached by the mid-nineteenth century; the reform of that system in the late Victorian era; and its erosion from the late nineteenth century and replaced with the Reformed pronunciation of Latin.

Then Classen (2012) has shown an evidence of the history of language from medieval literature at large to confirm the foreign languages being used in poetry. Significantly, however, a number of poets far into the seventeenth century voiced great concern about the consequences of poor foreign language skills, revealing the true extent to which multilingualism was an important matter. Generally, he then assumed that the less courtly poets addressed the issue of multilingualism, the more that the phenomenon must have been present already then.

Nutton (2012) has explored the reasons of Greek-speaking doctors who migrated westwards, and, through the writings of their most famous representative, Galen of Pergamum (127-216). He then examined Greek doctors who have been integrated into the Latin society. His studies were based on the history of medicine in the Roman world. This history has frequently been viewed from the perspective of the Elder Pliny (ca. AD 70), who described an invasion of incompetent, worthless charlatans from Greece and beyond. This extreme viewpoint was not shared by many of the inhabitants of Italy and the Western provinces, who welcomed these outsiders.

3. Material & Methods

To master the Latin Language, the researcher had made an effort to learn Latin Language in Singapore. It took around nine months to complete the beginning, intermediate and advance level of Latin syllabus. All important aspects of Latin Language such as nouns, verbs, literatures, phrases, proverbs and texts were studied throughout this course. These would allow the understanding of Latin and to improve the skill of reading and writing. At the

same time, this course has enriched the ability to detect and configure the Latin words which had been borrowed by languages such as English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, Dutch and Deutsch. This is very important part of this study as it will assist the interpretation of the results and drives a firm analysis of the discussion for this article.

Materials used for this study comprises those of offline and online sources. A selection of best documents to study was conducted. For this task, we categorized our material collection into two major sources. First we collected all materials related to the technical understanding of Latin. These will include primary resources of this study which is The Wheelock's Latin 6th Edition. Then Wheelock's Latin Reader 2nd Edition had enriched our skills of reading and it had also improved our understanding towards the literature part of Latin Language. For the second materials, we searched after books and articles related to the development of science, social science and humanities. We mainly focus on the used of Latin towards all of three disciplines in academics that have been mentioned previously.. Materials related to the used of Latin in these three major disciplines of academic were at times found to be irrelevant to this study. To overcome this problem, we analyzed each and every material particularly so as to keep in check with our aims of this study.

The next step is to analyze materials based on understanding. This would involve the content analysis of the used of Latin Language in science, social science and humanities. Analysis is based on our own understanding which we had determined after we had executed the first and second phases of this study. To analyze all materials, we divided it into three part, Latin for zoology and botany, Latin for Law and Latin for philosophy. Then we look at the historical elements of the materials, and reviewing information to find out the Latin words. The most critical part is to examine the used of Latin in philosophy. This is because, it involves so much translation. Even we can do it online, but we are confident to use our own skill as practices for this translation work.

4. Results

The used of Latin in science can be clearly seen through the scientific names of plants and animals. Even though, it is found that there are so many resources in physics, astronomy and other discipline in science; the scientific names are popular used by scholars, intellectual and researcher until the present. The most basic understanding for the scientific names was inherited through the foundation of the modern scheme known as Binomial Nomenclature. This scheme was developed by Swedish scholars, Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus was also known as the father of modern taxonomy and considered as the father of modern ecology. Binomial Nomenclature is a formal system of naming species of living things by giving each a name composed of two parts, both of which use Latin grammatical forms. The first identifies the genus (the species belongs) and the second part identifies the species within the genus. From the previous section of this article, we had given some examples of scientific names of plants and animals. In our in depth analysis for one example, mimosa belongs to the genus mimosa and within this genus to the species mimosa pudica. Pudica is a Latin word which means *shy*. This is only one example. There are so many scientific names all around the world in Latin. Human has also been identified as Homo Sapien; homo is the genus and it means man while sapien is also a Latin word means wise. Our results indicated several findings based on one book written by Carl Linnaeus, *Species Plantarum* published in 1753.

In social science, we refer to the discipline of Law and as we mentioned earlier. We only show three popular examples of terms used in court. But then there are 367 Latin terms used as common practices in court. The terms were also used in teaching at school and university. There are so many strands of Law and each of the terms has its own meaning and represents each concept and cases related to law and judiciary. Our findings on this discipline are restricted only to English Law. in French, Spanish and Italian, the terms are still being used and they represent the explanation of every section in Law of each of the countries.

In humanities, we look at the Philosophy part of Latin which derived from so many resources on the internet. Such scholars and intellectual used Latin as a word describing their thought and opinion. As we mentioned earlier, Rene Descartes used *cogito ergo sum* for represent his stands towards his work. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the statement is indubitable, Descartes argued, because even if an all-powerful demon were to try to deceive him into thinking that he exists when he does not, he would have to exist for the demon to deceive him. Therefore, whenever He thinks, He exists. This is an example of philosophical thought by Rene Descartes. It unravels more studies to the scholars and intellectual for exploring more ideas and new thoughts regarding his statement. Some of Latin phrases are also being used by scholars and intellectuals. Our findings found 45 phrases are still used in Philosophy. These are phrases that are only related to English-Latin used. But then there exist many explanations of Latin used in philosophical terms in other languages. We also found the used of Latin phrases during medieval period of western civilization. There are 137 terms used to describe the aspect of scholasticism (The system of theology and philosophy taught in medieval European universities, based on

Aristotelian logic and the writings of the early Christian Fathers and emphasizing tradition and dogma).

5. Discussion

Our focus mainly relates to the use of Latin as a language in academic. Through this, we could see how Latin act as a medium for knowledge construction. With four results that we found, there are three main reasons to discuss on Latin as a language for knowledge. First the history of Greek and Rome Civilization really influence the birth of Western Civilization. Even the Greek has contributed so many scholars and intellectuals, but the Rome has shown a very fast development of its civilization. Latin starts as a communication language among elite people in Rome Civilization. But then when the translation of Bible from Greek to Latin, it influence the people of Rome at that time to use Latin as their common language. At the same time, Christianity used this situation as an opportunity to spread out its understanding with Latin. At the same time, the knowledge construction in Rome had been written in Latin language. Literature and beautiful expressions of philosophical thought were also done in Latin. All of these circumstances had really strengthened Latin as a language for all aspects of life. The expansion of its empire through the conquest of other region such as Britannia (Great Britain), Iberia peninsular, and Mediterranean region (including Italy) has brought Latin to all over the places. With the aim to expand the Christian all over Europe and introduce new knowledge to the people, Latin has been established in Western Civilization and even after the Enlightenment, and also being spoken by only the pope in Vatican, Latin is still flourishing in academic realms especially.

Then if we take a look at other aspects, Latin is a dead language. It means there are no efforts or studies from linguist or expert in Latin language to develop new words and other technical aspects of the language. That makes Latin stronger than any other languages. The Greek Language is still dynamic. The works from the linguist is still going on and it still develops new approach for other purposes. It is the same with English, French, Spanish and even Malay Language. When there is no work from other linguist or intellectual to develop and to improve Latin Language, automatically Latin is a stabile and consistent to use to explain the scientific names for zoological and botanical subject in science. It does have the same reason with the used of Latin in Law, Philosophy and writing a document. When Linnaeus decided to try to Label all the things of the earth he selected Latin to avoid the confusion of the living languages that are in constant state of flux. A dog may be a "Hunde" in German or a Chein in French but the Latin *caninus* was dog in either of them. Wolf in English is a wild variation, Wulf in German is hunt. Latin eliminates the chances for error in interpretation of the word they are searching for.

Through our findings, especially in Law and Philosophy, the used of Latin is because of the legal system is influenced by Roman law. England (and most of its former colonies) and the United States of America use a variation of the old Roman law called "Common Law." With this explanation, the used of Latin in Law has made the language itself popular and at the same time, it has contributed so much effort for the knowledge construction. In philosophy, the western scholars and intellectuals have contributed so much concepts, method and analysis to the discipline in academics. This is considered as one of the factors of the beauty of Western Civilization and it has been used by other countries to develop their own studies based on this approach. With this circumstances, again the Latin has been introduced to other people all around the world and it does really help to strengthen to used of Latin thus develop new knowledge based on Latin terms which has been used in any other academic discipline.

6. Conclusion

It is crystal clear to view Latin as a language for knowledge. From all of its usage, throughout all disciplines in academics, Latin is part of knowledge construction and its influence really inspires students, scholars and intellectuals to explore new studies and used Latin as an aid for knowledge expansion. As the process of knowledge construction being develop all over the world, and in science, law and philosophy even in the area of publication, Latin is the main choice for assisting and solving problems related to its used and its ability. In academic realm for instance, Latin would last as it would live longer than it should be.

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