

LATIN VOCABULARY AND THE ENGLISH DERIVATIVE^{*}

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There is a very widespread feeling that the teaching of Latin vocabulary both is unsuccessful in itself, and does not lead to a good knowledge of English. As to the first point, the deplorably widespread use of English translations is sufficient evidence that the teaching of vocabulary is ordinarily far from successful (the very thing which is the chief cause of students dropping out of Latin); and as to the second point, while we boast that most of our thought-words are derived from the Latin, it is only comparatively rarely, as the writer knows from written tests in a large number of first-class high schools, that the average student gains very much knowledge of English etymology from his study of Latin. It is for these two reasons especially that the writer, after many years of theorizing and experiment, is ready to affirm: (1) that the vocabulary question is the *crux* of Latin teaching, (2) that it is therefore imperative that the teaching of vocabulary be made both successful and practical, and (3) that this can be done in the best, if not the only way, by the use from the beginning of a continuous series of word-lists based upon English derivatives.

Of course some steps have already been taken toward utilizing the English derivative in this way: notably in the vocabularies at the back of Rolfe's *Caesar*, and the *Beginner's Books* edited by Robberts and Rolfe and Collar and Daniel; in the questions on derivation in the Smith-Laing *Beginner's Book*; and in the special vocabularies in D'Ooge's *Latin for Beginners*. In the latter case, the vocabularies to be learned are all placed in the back of the book with English derivatives from many of the Latin words parenthetically inserted in the same type. All these textbooks show a general tendency toward utilizing the English derivative.

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It is the present purpose to go a few steps farther and to suggest a regular method of building up vocabulary throughout after approximately the following pattern:

liber, libri (libr), m., "book." LIBRARY (a collection of books).
miles, militis (milit), m., "soldier." MILITARY (pertaining to a soldier).
sequor, sequi (sequ, secut, 3), secutus (dep.), "follow." CONSEQUENCE (that which follows); CONSECUTIVE (following).

The first new point here proposed is the reprinting of the stem by itself (to use a term which will apply to noun and verb alike), and secondly, the definition of the English derivative in close terms of the original meaning. The stem thus occurs in three places, viz., in the genitive, in the reprinting, and in the English derivative. The meaning also occurs in two places: in its usual place, and in the definition of the derivative. Thus the English derivative easily teaches not only the spelling of the stem, already emphasized by segregation, but also the meaning of the stem. That is, we fully accomplish conservation of memory-energy by reiteration and by the use of association of ideas. Printing the English derivative in capitals also calls attention to it strongly. To be sure, about 20 per cent of the words in Dr. Lodge's chosen list of 2,000 for Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil have no English derivatives or cognates near enough to be useful, these being chiefly conjunctions, adverbs, and the like; but 80 per cent remain.

In regard to the use of the English derivatives from these 80 per cent we must be careful to follow pedagogical laws. We must use pedagogical selection, pedagogical definition, and pedagogical printing. In the first place, the English derivative must truly reflect the main root-meanings; or, if possible, the two main meanings, if there are two, should be reflected by two English words, as may often be done, e.g., *altus*, "high," "deep," gives both "altitude" and "alto"; *pendo*, "hang," "pay," gives both "suspend" and "pension," and so on. Again the derivative must be defined in clear and simple terms, not to save thought—for the finding of other English derivatives will leave room for original thinking—but to make the current of thought clear and rapid from the first of the Latin word to the end of the definition of the derivative. And third, the printing should be of the very best and on the very

best paper, with print large and not crowded, the Latin being in black face, the parsing in italics, the meaning in roman, and the derivative in small capitals.

There are one or two other pedagogical points in this connection. It is best, for example, since thirty words can by this method be learned as easily and permanently as ten by the usual method, to give thirty at a time, and to devote a whole lesson if necessary to the one page. It is better still if the words on this page be of not more than two sorts, e.g., twenty nouns of the third declension and ten verbs of the second conjugation. It will also be seen that most irregularities may be taught by English derivatives, as in the case of perfect passive participle stems; e.g., *video*, "see," gives us both "provide" and "provision"; *surgo*, "rise," gives "insurgent" and "insurrection"; *sequor*, "follow," gives "consequence" and "consecutive," and so on; all of which will tend to give pedagogical unity and continuity even to the learning of principal parts. Conjugation may very often be taught in the same way, especially with the first conjugation; e.g., from *vacō* comes "vacation," hence *vacō* is seen to be of the first conjugation.

Nor should this definite study of vocabulary and derivatives together, although most important there, by any means be confined to the beginning work. In reading authors, experience shows that 50 per cent to 100 per cent more progress than usual may be made by the use and memorizing of lists of chosen words arranged in order of occurrence, with defined English derivatives where there are any from the Latin word. After Caesar, fewer principal parts need be given, but more derivatives, with fewer of them defined. Good results may be obtained in the Freshman class in college, where the ubiquitous "pony" tells its own tale of weakness in vocabulary. Thus we should have a list for Caesar of 1,000 to 1,200 words, for Cicero of 1,400, for Vergil of 1,800, and so on. This is about Dr. Lodge's plan. The number of English derivatives introduced will be about 1,000 for Caesar, 2,000 for Cicero, 2,500 or more for Vergil, and so forth.

The net result of all this, not only for Latin or English purposes, but for general educational purposes, is enthusiastically gratifying from the outset, and in two ways: first, the student finds at once

that Latin is not a dead language as he had supposed, but that it is at least as useful and informing as any other study; in other words, that it is practical. Secondly, he finds that he can really master his Latin words with a reasonable amount of effort—to his surprise and delight. If the student gets on the average but one good English derivative for each Latin word, he feels abundantly repaid; much more so if he finds that he can himself suggest or define others analogous to those thus clearly set before him. All of this makes more and more, as the study progresses, for true education and real inspiration.

Nor does the use of the English derivative thus, as many might suppose, lead to mistranslations of the original through use of a derivative chosen at haphazard. On the contrary, the derivative properly chosen and defined serves only to throw into clearer focus the actual root-meaning of the Latin original, often clearing up many ambiguities in words given as meanings, or doing away with the necessity of explanations. For example, the intransitiveness of *pendeo*, “hang,” is shown from the derivative “impend,” “to overhang”; while “suspend” shows the transitivity of *pendo*, and so on. Experience shows further that the student gets to habitually using the derivative only as an index of meaning, for it is omitted in the list where it constitutes a translation; thus making the common caution against such mistranslation even less necessary than usual. It is plain, too, that the training derived from the etymologizing of so many English derivatives develops the power of etymologizing Latin compounds, while in relating the English words to the Latin original and to other English words there is developed a power of synonymy and interpretation which enables the student in a marked degree to adapt his one or two given root-meanings to the context before him in his reading. If the student cannot adapt his root-meaning to the context (and he is induced by this method to make some attempt at doing so), he must of course resort to his general vocabulary as he does for words forgotten or not in his word-list. Nor need he look up many forgotten words, if rightly taught, for the whole method develops such power of memory as will enable him to retain with some ease, after a time, all the words listed, whether having English cognates

or not. Thus does memory grow by its own success—the only way a memory can grow—instead of becoming weaker and weaker by constant failure, as is so commonly the case with Latin students, with many of whom the net result of long years of study is merely an increase of speed in looking things up.

A most important question now is, do students naturally take to such a method? The answer given is that they may easily be interested at any point in the first year, or at the beginning of any author subsequently. Students appear to be easily convinced of several things: (1) that it may justly be considered a reasonable thing to be asked to learn all the words in one's Beginning Book, or all the important words in one's reading lesson, provided this can be done with a reasonable amount of effort; (2) that the ability to read the next lesson or a sight passage with greater ease and enjoyment is certain to follow if the list is kept reviewed up to date; (3) that the easiest thing to do in the long run is habitually to keep the list up to date, including always the learning of the new words in the day's lesson before translating it; (4) that one can save more than enough time from looking up words, and especially parts of verbs, to memorize thoroughly the words in his list including principal parts of verbs, etc.; (5) that it pays very much better to put one's effort into learning the words in the lesson than into merely making a translation, leaving one with no more knowledge of Latin at the end of the year; (6) that with memory and insight trained by practice, vocabulary is not an insuperable obstacle, and that there is more time left after learning the important words, than there usually is, to devote to subject-matter and other things; and (7) that the knowledge of English gained will be a permanent possession of great value. It is a further fact that students accustomed to such lists miss them seriously when omitted, and wish to keep on with them year after year, keeping old words reviewed, and keeping up to the diction of the new author. The independent lists for each author also enable any given class or student to take up the study with a clean sheet at the beginning of any author, interest being soon aroused by the evidently practical value of the study.

The time required in class is an important question. This is reduced to almost nothing if the students are furnished with printed

lists of the words for today's or any previous lesson, to have the meanings written in at home from memory. If oral recitation is desired, five or ten minutes a day on the average will include a twenty-minute word-match occasionally. Over against this is the fact that students so taught can translate more rapidly and correctly in class, so as actually to save in class much more than the time spent as above. The student's time at home is also saved one third to one-half, including the memorizing of words. As it is, the student labors long and hard to learn his Latin vocabulary in the first place and if the teacher desires to do any teaching of English etymology worthy the name, this must all be done as an extra, and requires a great deal of time, as many of us know. The only solution is to have Latin original and English derivatives printed side by side with so much of definition as will enable any student to do the whole thing thoroughly at home unaided, with a great gain in definiteness, permanency, and economy of time and effort.

The practical benefits of such a system have been abundantly verified in the writer's own experience. He gives the following evidence for what it is worth. A class of college beginners two years ago, including many who could not pass in rhetoric, and nearly all of Scandinavian extraction, met four times per week and devoted five to six hours per week to preparation. It will be admitted by those who have had to deal with such students that a class of this sort cannot learn Latin much, if any, faster than a fairly good high-school class. With this class a special textbook copied with hectograph was used, which had three chief features: (1) the vocabulary was to be almost wholly learned from defined English derivatives; (2) ability to parse was to be acquired from learning paradigms of *endings*, not paradigms of *whole words*; from making verb stems by rule; and from the use of a great many drill exercises on changing the number of declinable forms or of their endings by themselves, and exercises on changing the number, tense, voice, mood (or all of these together) of verbs or verb endings, accompanied by translation after each change; (3) syntax was abbreviated and very much simplified, the ablative and subjunctive being handled alphabetically for convenience.

With this Beginning Book mastered, and a vocabulary of less than 400 words, the class began to read Caesar early in January, and read three and a half books by June. The vocabulary and grammar learned before beginning Caesar were entirely sufficient, and the syntax needed only to be supplemented by a close study of the subjunctives met with. The learning of the important words from the list each day, and the writing out of the meanings of one page per day in review enabled the class to cover the whole ground comfortably. The total result, as shown for example in the ability of the students to do sight reading, was so gratifying that the writer rewrote the book on the same general lines, but making some changes, such as the introducing of simple *oratio obliqua* constructions and active ablative absolutes much earlier. Last year's class, although like the other of less than average ability in other departments, succeeded in beginning Caesar before Thanksgiving, and in handling it even better than the previous class. The four books were easily finished before June, including as before the mastering of 1,000 Latin words and 2,000 English derivatives.

The word-list has also proved equally helpful with students beginning Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil, who had not been so prepared. A student joining the Caesar class kept up for no other reason. A small class in Vergil began reading at the rate of 25 lines per lesson, preparing this amount with difficulty in two hours of preparation. After the fiftieth lesson, with the same amount of effort, the class was reading 100 lines, and covered the six books of Vergil in one semester, four hours per week. It also memorized about 1,000 words. A class in Cicero progressed in the same way.

The same method has also been used by the writer in Greek, in reading Xenophon, Plato, and Homer, with largely similar results. This successful testing-out of the system with three authors in each language, as well as with a beginning book in each, seems to give at least some real evidence of its pedagogical soundness and its practical benefits.



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