

## UNIT 41. THE ROMANISATION OF BRITAIN. LATIN INFLUENCE ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. LOANWORDS AND CALQUES.

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### 1. Introduction

The influence of Latin on the English language is a topic of enduring linguistic and historical significance, particularly in the context of Britain's Roman past. This unit explores the historical processes underlying the Romanisation of Britain and traces the multiple phases during which Latin left an indelible mark on English vocabulary, morphology and syntax.

The analysis draws on authoritative linguistic and historical sources, including *A History of English* (Baugh and Cable, 2013), *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (ed. Hogg, 2011), and *The Oxford Guide to Etymology* (Durkin, 2014), alongside recent research in historical sociolinguistics and contact linguistics such as *Language Contact* (Millar, 2015) and *Borrowed Words* (Durkin, 2020). Furthermore, it examines the mechanisms of borrowing and their integration into English, highlighting the coexistence and interplay between Latin and Germanic linguistic elements. Finally, pedagogical implications are discussed with an emphasis on how vocabulary and etymology can be effectively taught in the EFL classroom, providing teachers with strategies to deepen learners' linguistic and cultural competence.

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### 2. Historical Background: The Romanisation of Britain

The Roman conquest of Britain, commencing in AD 43 under Emperor Claudius, marked the beginning of a profound transformation in the island's cultural and linguistic landscape. Roman rule, lasting nearly four centuries, introduced Latin as the language of administration, commerce, law and education among the elite and in urban centres.

The process of Romanisation entailed not only political domination but also cultural assimilation, visible in architecture, infrastructure, religion and language. Latin coexisted alongside native Celtic languages, and although it never fully replaced the indigenous tongues, it established itself as a prestigious lingua franca, particularly in towns and

military sites. The archaeological and epigraphic evidence, alongside classical sources (Mattingly, 2006; Salway, 1981), suggests that Latin influence permeated various aspects of daily life and set the stage for the linguistic legacy it would leave on English.

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### **3. Latin Influence on the English Language**

#### **3.1. Early Latin Influence (Roman Britain)**

During Roman Britain, Latin permeated primarily through place names, personal names and administrative terminology. Although the rural majority likely continued speaking Celtic languages, Latin loanwords entered the lexicon, especially relating to governance, military terms and trade. Words such as *street* from Latin *strata*, *wall* from *vallum*, and *wine* from *vinum* are relics of this early contact. This initial lexical borrowing laid a foundation that would be built upon in later centuries despite the eventual Roman withdrawal in the early 5th century.

#### **3.2. Latin Influence during the Christianisation Period**

The Christianisation of Britain, beginning in the late 6th century, reintroduced Latin as the language of the Church, scholarship and liturgy. Latin manuscripts, ecclesiastical vocabulary and Latin-based education systems reinforced the prestige of Latin. The missionary efforts, notably those of St. Augustine of Canterbury, brought Latin ecclesiastical terms into Old English, including *altar*, *bishop* and *priest*. Latin also influenced Old English syntax and morphology indirectly through learned writing and translation practices. The Medieval Church remained a primary vector for Latin's linguistic influence, shaping not only vocabulary but also intellectual and cultural development (Robinson, 1992; Blair, 2005).

#### **3.3. Middle English and the Renaissance Revival of Latin**

The Norman Conquest of 1066 introduced Norman French, itself heavily Latin-derived, which increased Latin influence on English exponentially. The Renaissance further revived interest in Classical Latin, leading to the deliberate introduction of Latin words into English, especially in scholarly, legal and scientific contexts. This period saw the enrichment of English vocabulary with Latinate synonyms, such as *commence* alongside *begin* and *observe* alongside *watch*. Latin also provided affixes and roots for the formation of neologisms, helping English to adapt to new intellectual paradigms (Baugh and Cable, 2013; Crystal, 2003).

#### **3.4. Scientific, Legal and Technical Latin in Modern English**

In contemporary English, Latin continues to be a significant source of vocabulary, especially in scientific, medical, legal and technical registers. Terms like *species*, *agenda*, *versus* and *alibi* illustrate Latin's enduring role as a language of precision and authority. Latin phrases are often retained in their original form in legal and academic contexts, serving as markers of expertise and tradition. The study of Latin roots remains vital for understanding and decoding complex English vocabulary, particularly for advanced language learners and professionals (Durkin, 2014; Millar, 2015).

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## 4. Types of Latin Borrowings

### 4.1. Loanwords: Classification and Examples

Loanwords are direct borrowings from Latin into English, either retained in their original or adapted forms. These borrowings can be classified by semantic field, such as military (e.g. *captain*, *soldier*), administrative (e.g. *census*, *forum*), religious (e.g. *altar*, *baptism*) and everyday terms (e.g. *window*, from Old Norse influenced by Latin *vindōna*). Morphological adaptations often occur to conform to English phonology and grammar, but the Latin etymological roots remain discernible (Hogg, 2011).

### 4.2. Calques: Concept, Types and Examples

Calques, or loan translations, involve the literal translation of Latin expressions into English. Rather than borrowing the word itself, the conceptual elements are translated to create new English compounds or phrases. Examples include *skyscraper*, from a Latin-based metaphor; *flesh and blood*, paralleling Latin *caro et sanguis*; and *grasp the nettle*, a phrase conceptually similar to Latin expressions. Calques enrich English by introducing new semantic structures while maintaining native phonological and morphological patterns (Durkin, 2020).

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## 5. The Coexistence of Latin and Germanic Roots

English vocabulary reflects a complex interplay between Latin and its Germanic origins, often providing multiple synonyms with nuanced differences in register and meaning. For instance, *ask* (Germanic) coexists with *inquire* (Latin), and *kingly* with *royal*. This duality enriches English expressive capacity and presents both opportunities and challenges for learners. Understanding these layers aids in developing lexical awareness and stylistic flexibility (Baugh and Cable, 2013).

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## 6. Educational Applications: Teaching Vocabulary and Etymology in the EFL Classroom

In the EFL classroom, teaching Latin-origin vocabulary and etymology can deepen learners' lexical competence and intercultural understanding. Strategies include explicit etymological instruction, encouraging learners to identify Latin roots, prefixes and suffixes, which helps decode unfamiliar words. Integrating historical context fosters motivation and a broader appreciation of language development. Activities such as word formation exercises, etymology research projects and comparative analysis between Latin-derived and Germanic words enhance both vocabulary retention and critical thinking. Moreover, linking vocabulary instruction to subject-specific content, such as science and law, aligns with interdisciplinary teaching approaches advocated in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the Spanish educational framework.

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## 7. Conclusion

The Romanisation of Britain initiated a long-lasting Latin influence on the English language that continues to shape its vocabulary and stylistic registers. Through successive historical phases, from Roman occupation and Christianisation to the Renaissance and modern scientific discourse, Latin has enriched English both lexically

and conceptually. Loanwords and calques illustrate the dynamic processes of linguistic borrowing, while the coexistence of Latin and Germanic elements adds to the complexity and richness of English. In language education, awareness of Latin's legacy enhances vocabulary acquisition, cultural literacy and learner autonomy.

By integrating these insights with the pedagogical principles outlined in the CEFR and adhering to the national and regional legal frameworks, including the Organic Law 3/2020, known as LOMLOE, and the Order ECD/1172/2022, comprising the Aragonese Curriculum for Secondary Education, educators can contribute to comprehensive and contextualized English language instruction that bridges historical knowledge and practical competence.