Latin Etymologies in Communication Terminology

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Rome was a model of organization and communication. The term "communication", and
its meaning in particular, comes from Latin. Many Roman traditions regarding communicational
practices are still valid today, adjusted, obviously, according to the needs of our society. Bureaucratic
organization, especially in European civilisation, originates in the Roman world. Ancient Rome
developed a service of organized communication, subordinating several communication networks.
During the Roman imperial period, communication relied on two pillars: the Roman postal service and
the imperial offices. This explains how the terminology related to communication sciences usually has
a Latin etymology. Our study has selected the main notions of communication sciences with a Latin
etymology.

Keywords: Rome; etymologies; traditions; inheritance; communication sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Rome was the city which established a vast, extremely efficient and modern
communication networks, therefore it is not by chance that many linguistic terms in the field of
communication sciences are of Latin origin. Although ancient Rome did not enjoy our
communication means, it managed to communicate with all its provinces on three continents,
thus explaining once more the success of its imperialism in history. Communication in ancient
Rome (Badea, 2013, pp. 54-64) actually relied on two pillars: 1. the Roman postal service, a
real ministry of transports, employing military functionaries, a service disposing of a vast
network of roads, built by the state (with the help of the soldiers); 2. the imperial offices, mainly
developed by Hadrian, were real public relations offices, meant on make the connection
between the Empire and its provinces, as well as its citizens. Our article has selected the most
often used and the best known terms of Latin origin in the field of communication sciences,
which, for a better demonstration, we will present by twos, the current term or expressions,
followed by the Latin term that we will also describe. Many communication-related Latin terms
define much more appropriately, in our opinion, the communicational process. The best
example is rumor,-oris, s.m. = 1. rumour, 2. public opinion, other people’s opinions, reputation
and rumusculus,-i, s.m. = insignificant rumour (Strechie, 2009), and the definition of rumour
found in DEX = 1. news, ungrounded information which was not verified, 2. rumour caused by
voices, by the activity and movement of a crowd, murmur etc. (Guțu, 1993, p. 366). In the
analysis of Kapferer (Kapferer, 2006), the expert in the phenomenology of rumours, the closest
definition to this phenomenon is the one provided by the term rumour of Latin origin (also
2. ETYMOLOGIES

Act 'act' from acta, -orum n.n. = acts, decisions, laws, bulletin, minutes
Agent 'agent' and agenție 'agency' from ago, -ere, egi, actum, vb.t. = to move, to drive, to carry, to lead, to live, to behave, to lie, to fulfil, to do, to bring, to perform, to play, to treat
Auditoriu 'audience' from audio, -ire, -ivi, -itum vb. = to hear, to listen, to find out, auditio-
onis, s.f. = rumour, listening, auditor, -oris, n.m. = audience, listener, disciple, and auditorium,
-iī s.n. = lecture room, auditorium.
a comunica ‘to communicate’ from communico, -are, avi, -atum, vb.i. = to make common, to share something with somebody, to associate, to take responsibility for
calomnie ‘calumny’ from calumnia, -ae s.f. = calumny, unfair accusation, deceit, chicanery, intrigue
circuit ‘circuit’ from circuitus, -us n.m. = detour, way round, circuit, avoidance, beating about
the bush civil from civilis, -e adj. = civil, related to citizenship, civic
civic ‘civic’ from cīvīcis, -a, -īn adj. = civic
comentariu ‘comment’ from commentatio, -onis n.f. = reflection, meditation, study
comunicare ‘communication’ from communicatio, -onis n.f. = communication, sharing, and from the verb communico, -are, avi, atum = to make common, to share something with somebody, to associate, to take responsibility for
comprehensiune ‘comprehension’ from comprehensio, -onis n.f. = catching, comprehension, and comprehendo, -ere, -di sum, vb. = to catch, to comprise, to express, to grasp, to understand, to describe, to tell, to embrace
comutări ‘commutations’ from commutatio, -onis, n.f. = change
compromite ‘to compromise’ from compromitto, vb. = to pledge oneself by bail, to recognize someone’s arbitration
computer ‘computer’ from computatio, -onis, n.f. = calculation
conativă ‘conative’ (funcția conativă a comunicării ‘conative function of communication’) from conor, -ari, -atus sum vb. = to try, to strive, to try to do something great, and from conatus, -us, n.m. = attempt, effort, start
concesie ‘concession’ from concessio, -onis, n.f. = assignment, concession, permission
conferință ‘conference’ (conferință de presă ‘press conference’) from confero, conferre, contuli, collatum vb. = to gather, to bring, to contribute, to face, to oppose, to clash, to compare, to carry, to transport, to apply, to use, to utilize
confesie ‘confession’ from confessio, -onis n.f. = confession, recognition
consens ‘consensus’ from consensus, -us n.m. = agreement, understanding, conspiracy
consili ‘to counsel’ from consilior, -ari, -atus sum vb. = to take counsel with, to deliberate, to advise
contract ‘contract’ from contractio, -onis, n.f. = the act of contracting
contradicție ‘contradiction’ from contradictio, -onis. n.f. = contradiction, combating
controversă ‘controversy’ from controversia, -ae n.f. = dispute, controversy, misunderstanding, trial
convenție ‘convention’ from conventio, -onis, n.f. = meeting, convention, pact
conveniență ‘convenience’ from convenienția, -ae n.f. = perfect agreement, harmony
convocare ‘convocation’ from convoco, -are, -avi, -atum vb. = to convene
corporație ‘corporation’ from corpor, -oris n.n. = body, person, totality, substance
cultura ‘culture’ – the etymology of the word cultură ‘culture’ is a Latin one and it means l. care, cultivation; at the same time culture is a means of communication, without culture human
society could not have developed and survived. Conflicts could not be settled, a life in common and a peaceful dialogue would be excluded.5
curriculum vitae (CV in its abbreviated form) = the course of life
denotativă ‘denotative’ from denoto, -are, -avi, -atum vb. = to mean, to distinguish, to indicate
devianță ‘deviation’ from devius, -a, -um adj. = devious, roundabout, lost
discriminare ‘discrimination’ from discrimen, -inis, n.n. = demarcation line, interval, distance, distinction, difference etc.
disertație ‘dissertation’ from disertus, -a, -um adj = eloquent, clear, clarified, talented
discurs ‘discourse’ from discursus, -us n.m. = moving all around, spreading, and from discurro, vi = to run in all directions, to spread while hasting
efect ‘effect’ from effectus, -us n.m. = fulfilment, consequence, effect, result
elabora ‘to elaborate’ from elabora, -are, -avi, -atum vb. = to strive, to work with grim decision, to accomplish
electoral ‘electoral’ (comunicare electorală ‘electoral communication’) from eligo vb. = to elect
elocvent ‘eloquent’ from eloquens, -tis, adj. = who speaks in an attractive, eloquent manner.
We might say that eloquence was a way of life for the Romans, since it was a mandatory discipline in school for those intending to embrace a public career. The Romans wrote treatises on eloquence, and these treatises are still valid today in many respects.
emit ‘to emit’ from emitto, -ere, -misi, -missum vb. = to send, to release, to throw, to set free, to publish, to let go.
emisie ‘emission’ from emissio, -onis, n.f. = throw, flinging, release
enunț ‘statement, utterance’ (enunț comunicațional ‘utterance in communication’) from enuntio, -onis s.f. = account, utterance, sentence
fatrică ‘phatic’ (funcția fatică a comunicării ‘phatic function of communication’) from fateor, -eri, fassus sum vb. = to confess, to show and from fio, fieri, factus sum vb. = to be done, to do, to happen, to become, to be appreciated.
globalizare ‘globalization’ from globus, -i n.m. = sphere, globe, mass of people, crowd. Rome as a superpower of European Antiquity applied globalization, a process which became visible especially through Romanization.
imagine ‘image’ from imago, -inis, n.f. = face, image, reproduction, copy, appearance, wax faces of ancestors
informatie ‘information’ from informatio, -onis n.f. = idea, notion, plan, draft, and from informo, -are, -avi, -atum, vb. = to form, to imagine, to conceive, to represent, to describe. The Latin preposition was inherited in most Romance languages and more than that, it is still widely used today in communication language.1
imitație ‘imitation’ from immitto, -ere, misi, missum vb. = to transmit over, to throw, to introduce, to let loose, to set free, to send to
instituțională ‘institutional’ (comunicare instituțională ‘institutional communication’) from instituo, -ere, -stittui, -stittutum, vb. = to settle, to put into, to dispose, to arrange, to prepare, to do, to start, to undertake, to decide, to establish, to form, to instruct
interpretatie ‘interpretation’ from interpretatio, -onis, n.f. = explanation, clarification
liminal ‘liminal’ (mesaj liminal ‘liminal message’) from limen, -inis, s.n. = threshold, entrance, building, barrier
locutor ‘locutor’ from locutio, -onis, n.f. = speech, expression
manifestare ‘manifestation’ from manifesto, -are, -avi, -atum, vb. = to make something obvious, to show openly
a manipula ‘to manipulate’ from manipulus, -i, s.m. = maniple, heap, pile (military sub-unit, very easily to guide, therefore extremely mobile)
masă ‘mass’ from massa, -ae n.f. = mass, heap, ball
media (mass media) from medium, -ii, n.n. = middle, centre, which belongs to everybody, public, means
mentalitate ‘mentality’ (istoria mentalităților ‘history of mentalities’) from mens, -tis, n.f. = brains, spirit, thought, opinion
mondializare ‘mondialization’ from mundus, -i, n.m. = world, universe, earth, sky
monitor, (Monitorul official ‘Official Gazette’) monitoriza ‘to monitor’ from monitor, -oris = which reminds of something, counsellor, adviser.
mutual ‘mutual’ from mutuus, -a, -um adj. = mutual, reciprocal
noțiune ‘notion’ from notio, -onis, n.f. = knowledge, notion, idea, research, acknowledgement
opinie ‘opinion’ (opinie public ‘public opinion’) from opinio, -onis, n.f. = opinion, belief, thought, presupposition
orator ‘orator’ from orator, -oris, n.m. = orator, messenger.
persuasione ‘persuasion’ from persuasio, -onis, n.f. = the action of persuading, of convincing, conviction, belief, opinion and from persuadeo, -ere, -suasi, -suasum vb. = to urge, to determine, to decide, to convince
proces ‘process’ (proces comunicational ‘communicational process’) from processus, -us n.m. = advance, fig. progress, success
publică ‘public’ (comunicare publică, relații publice ‘public communication, public relations’) from publicus, -a, -um, adj. = official, state-related, public, belonging to everybody, common, usual
publicitate ‘publicity’ from publicitatio, -onis, n.f. = auction, forfeiture for the benefit of the state.
receptor ‘receiver’ from recipio, -ere, -cepi, -ceptum, vb. = to draw back, to withdraw, to bring back, to take again, to acquire again, to come back, to receive, to admit, to permit, to guarantee, to promise
referent ‘referent’ from refero, -erre, reului, relatam, vb. = to take back, to withdraw, to bring back, to bring an answer, to strengthen, to reply, to answer, to reproduce, to remind, to report, to refer, to register
relație ‘relation’ (relații publice, relațional ‘public relations, relational’) from relatio, -onis, n.f. = the act of bringing, reporting, exposal, report, also relator, -oris, n.m. = referent,
sens ‘meaning’ from sensus, -us, n.m. = opinion, thought, meaning, sense, thinking, idea
social ‘social’ (comunicare social ‘social communication’) from socialis, -e, adj. = sociable, pertaining to the allies
societate ‘society’ from societas, -atis, n.f. = association, unification, alliance, union, society, company
status from status, -us, n.m. = position, status, situation, kind
stimul ‘stimulus’ from stimulus, -i, n.m. = stake, torture, thorn, irritation, urge
transmite ‘to transmit’ from transmitto, -ere, -misi, -missum, vb. = to send beyond, to transport, to move, to make pass, to leave, to cover (a distance)
verbal ‘verbal’ (mesaj verbal, comunicare verbal ‘verbal message, verbal communication’) from verbum, -i, n.n. = word, term, formula.
vizual ‘visual’ (comunicare vizuală ‘visual communication’) from visio, -nis n.f. = sight, landscape, representation, idea, vision.
3. CONCLUSION

These are a few Latin etymologies of the terms which are most often used in communication sciences. Our research does nothing but remind the Latin contribution to the vocabulary of communication sciences. The Latin terms can be found in Gheorghe Guţu (1993). Many terms in the field of communication sciences are also used in the administrative, military, political and legal language, demonstrating once again the importance of the Roman inheritance in the institutional sphere.

The main notions of communication (Vlăduţescu, 2009; Vlăduţescu, 2013) as a science were not only conceived by the Romans, but also successfully implemented by them.

References


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