

DIFFERENCES IN PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN TERMS IN SLOVAK AND ENGLISH

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1. Introduction

The Latin pronunciation applied in the Slovak and Czech settings is the medieval pronunciation. It is not the original Old Latin. It is often referred to as the Central-European Latin pronunciation variant that developed in the course of time ranging from the Antique period up to the Early Middle Ages. Nowadays so-called the Reformed Classical Pronunciation (*pronuntiatio restituta*) is the mainstream pronunciation of choice for most advanced Latin scholars all over the world.

There were no lower case letters in the Roman alphabet for Latin. The modern Latin contains both, lower and upper cases. As the Slovak alphabet originates in Latin one, generally, reading Latin texts tends to cause no difficulties to the Slovaks provided they are familiar with basic pronunciation rules.

Speakers of English used the traditional English pronunciation of Latin closely linked to the pronunciation of English until the early 20th century. At the end of the 19th century, it began to be superseded by the reformed Classical Pronunciation. The traditional pronunciation, however, is still in use in general academic English, the taxonomic nomenclature of botany and zoology, medical terminology, law, and some other fields of science. Pronunciation of Latin words in common use in English has been fully assimilated into the English sound system. There is no attempt to pronounce them as ancient Romans did. Usage of the Traditional Pronunciation varies among individuals, but there are some descriptive rules serving as a convenient benchmark.

2. Pronunciation of Latin Vowels (*vocālēs*)

Likewise in Slovak, Latin vowels are divided into short and long ones. In regular Latin texts, the length of the vowels has not been marked. But nowadays some textbooks and dictionaries indicate the length by putting a macron above the long vowels: *ā, ē, ī, ō, ū* by reason of methodology.

In the medieval way of pronunciation, the following rules related to the vocalic sounds are applied.

The vowel *-i-* has to be pronounced as *-j-* between two vowels in the initial or medial positions, such as in *iuniperus, iugulum, iuxtā, maior*, etc. *-i-* is generally written as *-j-* in the technical terminology, e.g.: *juniperus, jugulum, major*.

In English, however, the voiced palato-alveolar affricate [dʒ] is heard instead of the palatal approximant [j], i.e. [dʒu:nipərs], [dʒagjuləm], [meidʒə].

The vowel clusters *-ia-, -ie-, -ii-, -io-, -iu-* occurring most frequently in the final position within suffixes are spoken with *-j-* in between. Examples: *bestia* [bestija], *fastigium* [fastigijum], *fluvius* [fluvijus], *labiī* [labijí], *regiō* [regijó], *hodiē* [hodijé],

aciēs [acijés]. In other positions, the vocalic sound **-i-** is pronounced as the Slovak short **-i-** e.g. *incisūra, intestinum, ignōtus, imāgō, cornix, digitus, sinister, lupī, musculī*, etc.

The Latin diphthongs (diphtongēs) **-ae-**, **-oe-** are spoken as the Slovak long **-é-** [e:], the diphthong **-oe-** occurs rarely. Examples: *aestās, aetās, aegrōtus, formae, ranae, oesophagus, coeptus, oedema*, etc. In case that the vowel clusters **-ae-**, **-oe-** have to be pronounced separately, the second vowel is marked with a macron or a pair of dots placed over the vowel (diaeresis): **-aē-, -aë-,** as in *āēr/āēr, aēnus, poēta, coëō*, etc.

Vowels in commonly used Latin words have assimilated in the English sound system, such as in the words: *saliva, iris, cranium* that are generally produced as English words of non-Latin origin. For example, the vowel letter **-a-** represents the following vocalic sounds: [æ], [ei] and [ə] as in the words *scapula* [skæpjulə], *cranium* [kreiniəm] and *bacillus* [bə'siləs]. The variant schwa [ə] is also produced if **-a-** is in the final position, e.g. the above mentioned [skæpjulə] or *stoma* [stəumə]. The vowel **-i-** (plural ending) is often spoken as [i:] or [ai], such as in *fungi* [fangi:] or [fangai], or *cocci* [koksi:] or [koksai].

The digraphs **-ae-**, **-oe-** are treated as the vowel **-e-**. Therefore three pronunciation variants are possible: long [i:], such as in *anaemia* [ə'ni:miə], *taenia* [ti:niə], *foetus* [fi:təs], *amoeba* [ə'mi:bə]. [i:] is produced also if **-ae-** is in the final position including the taxonomy names, e.g. *algae* [ældʒi:], *larvae* [la:vi:], or *hominidae* [hominidi:]. The short vocalic sound [e] occurs in some words, such as *haemorrhage* [heməridʒ].

3. Pronunciation of Latin Consonants (consonantēs)

Pronunciation of the consonant **-c-** depends on the preceding vowel. Generally, it is pronounced as:

1. [k] following **-a-**, **-o-**, **-u-**, a consonant, or if in the final position, e. g.: *caput, scapula, cornu, mucōsus, cutis, clavicula, crista, nucleus*, etc. In English, the consonant **-c-** is spoken the same way. However, some words sound differently because the pronunciation of vowels varies. Compare medieval (Slovak) pronunciation of [skapula] and the English [skæpjulə],

2. affricate [c] (IPA transcription [ts]), if it is followed by the vowels **-e-**, **-i-**, **-y-**, or the diphthongs **-ae-**, **-oe-** (*cervix, viscera, picea, ciconia, incisio, cydonia, lymphocytus, caepa, coeptus*, etc.). In English, the fricative [s] is heard instead, such as in [sə:viks], [limfə'saitə:s], etc.

The Slovaks pronounce **-s-** in Latin words as the Slovak fricative [z] if occurring between two vowels (*nāsus, usus, rōsa, incīsūra, vēsīca*), or between a voiced consonant and the vowels: **-m-**, **-n-**, **-l-**, **-r-** (*plasma, pulsus, insula, inversus, ursus, pulsatilla*). In the initial and final positions, as well as if **-s-** is preceded or followed by a voiceless consonant, the fricative [s] is heard. The same rule is applied to **-ss-** (*locus, hiems, papula, gustus, aestivalis, capsula, subspeciēs, cerassus, massa*). In English, the consonant **-s-** (also the consonants: **-c-**, **-d-**, **-g-**, **-h-**, **-n-**, **-s-**, **-t-**, **-x-**) has different pronunciation variants depending upon surrounding sounds and syllable structure. It is pronounced as [s], such as in some previous examples ([palsəs], [vesikə][invə:'sus],

[ə:sus]), but not in *nāsus* [neizəs], *plasma* [plæzmə] or *incīsūra* [insai'zə] where the fricative [z] or palatalized -s-[ʒ] occurs.

The consonant **-x-** is pronounced as [gz] if it occurs between two vowels (*examen*, *exemplum*, *auxilium*, *fraxinus*, *saxātilis*, *taraxacum*), or as [ks] in other sound environment including the initial and final positions (*extractum*, *apex*, *calix*, *nox*, *xiphoīdeus*, *xenon*). In English, initial **-x-** is pronounced as [z] ([zenon], [zifoīdiəs]); in the initial position if preceded by the letter **-e-** as [gz] ([ig'zemplə]), or as [ks], (*exogen*[eksodʒən]).

The consonants **-d-**, **-t-**, **-n-**, and **-l-** in the clusters: **-di-**, **-ti-**, **-ni-**, **-li-** and **-de-**, **-te-**, **-ne-**, **-le-** are always hard consonants (*digitus*, *medius*, *tilia*, *nīdus*, *tunica*, *līnea*, *umbilicus*, *dēns*, *pedēs*, *terra*, *uterus*, *cortex*, *luteus*, *nervus*, *venenātus*, *regiōnēs*, *castanea*, *lepus*, *nucleus*). This rule does not apply to English. Unlike Slovak, in the English language soft and hard versions of the above consonants do not occur. The combination **-ti-** is read as [ci] in Slovak, if followed by a vowel or a diphthong (*scientia*, *substantia*, *articulātiō*, *insufficiētia*, *ōtium*, *spatiumvitium*), as [ti] if the consonants **-s-**, **-x-**, **-t-** precede the cluster **-ti-** + vowel/diphthong, or if **-i-** is long, and also in Greek words (*bestia*, *digestiō*, *combustiō*, *ostium*, *mixtiō*, *tōtīus*, *āitia*). In English, **-t-** before unstressed **-i-** + vowel is spoken as [ʃ] except initially or after **-s-**, **-t-**, **-x-**.

The cluster **-qu-** is read as [kv] in Slovak, as [kw] in English (*aqua*[akva] in Slovak, [ækvə] in English, similarly *equus*, *equisetum*, *aquila*, *squama*, *quercus*, *quartus*, *quinque*). The combination of **-ngu-** is pronounced as [ngv] in Slovak, as [ngw] in English. Compare e.g. *lingua*[lingva] vs. [ˈlingwə], *unguis*[unguis] vs. [əŋgwis], similarly *sānguis*, *anguis*, *unguentum*, etc.).

The consonant cluster **-ph-** is pronounced as [f] in both languages: *phylum*[filum] vs. [faɪləm]; similarly *phalanx*, *pharynx*, *phōsphorus*, *raphanus*, *delphinus*, etc.).

The cluster **-th-** is read as [t] in Slovak, but as [θ] in English, e.g. *thymus* is spoken as [θaiməs]. Other examples: *thotācicus*, *Thuja*, *orthoptera*, *tithymalus*, etc.

The consonant group **-rh-** is read as [r] in both languages (*rhīnocerōs*, *Antirrhinum*, *Microrrhinum*, *Cetorhinus*).

4. Stress in Latin words

In Latin, each vowel or diphthong belongs to a single syllable. Syllables end in vowels, unless there are multiple consonants. In this case the consonants are divided between the two syllables. In general, place of stress shows no differences in Slovak and English way of pronunciation of Latin words. Words of two syllables are stressed on the first syllable (*sinus* [ˈsɪnus] vs. [sainəs], *femur*[ˈfemur] vs. [fi:mə], *ulna*[ˈulna] vs. [alnə]). In English, the vowel of the first syllable is short if followed by two or more consonants, such as in *ulna*[alnə] or *septum* [ˈseptəm], but it is long if followed by a single consonant, such as in the above mentioned words *femur*[fi:mə], *sinus*[sainəs] or *iris* [aiəris], etc.

Words of three syllables and longer ones are stressed on the penultimate syllable if it is long (*abortus*[ab**o**rtus] vs.[ə'bo:təs], *stenosis* [steno**z**is] vs.[ste'nəusis]). In English, words of three syllables are also stressed on the next to last syllable if the vowel of that syllable is followed by a consonant cluster, such as in *phalanges* [fə'lændʒi:s], *patella*[pə'telə] or *medulla*[mi'dalə]. If the penultimate vowel is short, stress is placed on the third to last syllable in Slovak, such as in *femina* or *legimus*. In English, the antepenult syllable is stressed in all words where it is not possible to apply the rules mentioned before, e.g., *intestinum*[in'testinəm], *esophagus*[i:'səfəgəs], *gastropoda* [gæ'strɒpədə], etc.

5. Conclusion

The paper has the main objective to draw attention to two pronunciation varieties of Latin, (Central European and English) that have to be mastered by novices – future members of the discourse communities of medical and nursing staff, and biologists. Latin literacy - the ability to read, understand, use and pronounce Latin terms correctly in written and oral communication is an inseparable part of their registers. Differences in Central-European and English pronunciation variants may cause difficulties to Slovak learners who study two foreign languages at the same time, i.e. English for specific purposes – for their future careers, and Latin.

Comparison of the Slovak and English ways of pronunciation of Latin biology and medical terms shows significant differences in production of vowel sounds due to the facts, that in English, the differences between the vocalic sounds lie mainly in their quality and not only in quantity as in Slovak. The English pronunciation of Latin tends to include varieties of the vocalic sounds. Therefore, their mispronunciation may lead to misunderstanding. It seems that differences in the pronunciation of consonants do not play as significant role as the vowels do in spite of the fact that their pronunciation depends upon surrounding sounds and syllable structure.

Literature

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