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**Linguistics and the teaching of Classical history and culture**

Linguistics can be a useful tool for the teaching of Greek and Latin languages, history and culture. There are many ways to use this in the classroom. Some authors and subjects naturally lend themselves to these tools. The use of various differences in dialects can be useful both in literature and history. For example, in teaching about Homer, many students find the concept of oral poetry difficult to comprehend. They are used to literature that is composed by a single individual. If one takes the students through the various dialects, Ionic, Aeolic and Arcado-Cypriot, it makes the oral composition theory more convincing, especially if one reinforces the parallel of dialects with anachronisms, such as Bronze Age warriors casting an Iron Age spear.

Another area that can be reinforced by linguistics is Greek and Roman mythology and the historical influence of Greece and Greek culture on Rome. Teaching students about how the Romans added letters to their alphabet, such as Y and Z, to deal with the influx of Greek loan words, or how the Romans managed to develop the forms of Roman names of Greeks can show influence and fascinate the students. One obvious model is the transformation of Odysseus into Ulysses, first into Latin and then into English.

Working through loan words in various authors can aid in explaining literary as well as cultural influences of Greece on Rome. One example is the travels of the name of the Persian monarch Xerxes through various languages. Khshayarsha is the Persian, which is transliterated into Greek as Xerxes. When Khshayarsha is transliterated into Hebrew it is rendered Ahashwerosh. Hebrew often puts an initial aleph to indicate loan words. When the Hebrew is transliterated into Greek in the Septuagint and other later Greek works, it becomes Ahasueros. The final result is that we have two names of the Persian monarch in Greek, Xerxes and Ahasueros which on first sight have no linguistic resemblance to one another. This can be used both as an example of cultural diffusion, the development of religious and linguistic elements of Greek, Hebrew and Roman societies. Also, it can be used as an example of how useless transliteration from one language to another is in determining how ancient languages were pronounced.

Another fruitful area is the study of the alphabet, its origins, its variations and its spread from Egypt, Phoenicia, Greece, Rome, and the Mediterranean. This can do much to explain cultural division and how human societies progress.

The use of dialects and language diffusion can be very useful in dealing with the history of the ancient Mediterranean. Some obvious areas include the use of Semitic loan words in Middle Egyptian, loan words in Latin, the spread of koiné, and the adoption of the Greek alphabet as well as Greek loan words by Coptic, as much as 20% of the language. The use of these factors can help paint a picture of the ancient world that is very much different than was viewed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, one in which there was an enormous mixture of cultures and languages with one another.