

As the great essayist Ortega y Gasset reminds us, man has history, not nature, and the history of Spanish is a part of the continuum of those who spoke Latin. It is remarkable that Spanish is still so recognizably Latin after nearly two thousand years. About 85 percent of its present forms were brought to Iberia before the time of Christ!

Since Spain has suffered many invasions and has also engaged in many conquests, vocabulary from other than Latin sources became a part of what was to be called Castilian or Spanish. Lexical adoptions, so to speak, were to be made from the language of the Visigothic invaders who overran the Iberian Peninsula in the fifth century; from Arabic over some seven centuries; and from several Indian languages of America after 1492, notably Caribbean dialects, Náhuatl (Aztec) of Mexico, and Quechua of the Andean cordillera. In modern times, first French and then English have provided important contributions to the vocabulary.

Of major importance in the evolution of Latin to Spanish over the centuries are changes in physical articulation, in function indicators, in order and arrangement of the various elements, and in lexical items (vocabulary), along with changes in the actual meaning of a given form. The pronunciation of syllables and hence words gradually changed through the principle of least effort and through the influence of such substratum languages as Basque, still spoken by the descendants of those who learned the Romance language that was to be Spanish.

Latin usually indicated grammatical function and situation by affixes (*ad-*, *pre-*, *-or-*, *-i*, etc.), while the developing Castilian language tended in some cases to signal these circumstances by prepositions: *Catullus filio Caesaris librum dat* becomes **Catullus da al hijo el libro de César**. Of the six grammatical cases of Latin—nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, and vocative—Spanish generally kept only the accusative. The functions signaled by *o* in *filio* and by *is* in *Caesaris* are taken over by **al** and **de** respectively. Although word order in Latin was quite flexible, Spanish order became more fixed because of, among other things, the use of prepositions in the place of suffixes.

During the evolution of the language, some terms gradually took on new shades of meaning, while others were lost or replaced by vocabulary foreign to the Latin continuum. Latin *equus* ("horse") was replaced by *cáballus* (Spanish **caballo**), the original meaning of which was "nag." The Latin *cánis* ("dog") was replaced by **perro**, probably of Iberian origin. In many cases Castilian developed pairs from one Latin term, one learned and the other popular: *cáthedra* ("chair") gave both **cátedra** ("class," "audience," "professorship"), and **cadere** ("hip"); *causam* ("cause") became both **causa** ("cause") and **cosa** ("thing"); for "cold," both **frígido** and **frio** exist, one poetic and one of everyday use.

Sound Changes in the Evolution of Latin to Spanish

All languages tend to change gradually through the centuries, some faster than others, and some more consistently than others. Since the Middle Ages, Spanish appears to have changed much more slowly than English and more consistently than French. In all languages, one can cite and describe certain trends in these changes, and on the basis of frequency of occurrence, one can establish "rules" of transformation: this particular sound or syllable tends to become that under these circumstances; e.g. the *o* of Latin tends to change to *ue* when it is stressed. The Latin *pórtā* becomes **puerta** in Spanish. The forces behind the changes can't always be identified, but one of them is analogy, whereby two distinctive features are leveled to one. One such change in