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THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING GREEK AND LATIN

Abstract: *This article is devoted to the advantages of studying Latin and Greek. The main purpose of this article is to refute a common misconception about their uselessness. There are classified various arguments demonstrating the advantages and the great importance of studying classical languages.*

Key Words: *educational value, Latin, Greek, classical languages, ancient languages, classical education, education, foreign languages, the classics.*

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ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ДРЕВНЕГРЕЧЕСКОГО И ЛАТИНСКОГО ЯЗЫКОВ

Аннотация: *Статья посвящена преимуществам и образовательному значению классических языков, греческого и латинского. Приводятся различные доводы в пользу их изучения, предлагается их классификация.*

Ключевые слова: *образовательное значение, греческий язык, латинский язык, древнегреческий язык, латынь, классические языки, древние языки, классическое образование, образование, преподавание, иностранные языки.*

The study of Greek and Latin isn't popular in modern society, though they were the required languages at schools and universities until the early 20th century. Today we can find not a lot of educational institutions, offering classical languages, especially in Russia. In the late 20th century began the world movement for the revival of classical education, a major component of which is the study of two ancient languages or at least Latin. As a result, the number of schools with instruction of ancient languages has been rapidly increasing [11].

The importance of these languages is caused by the combined educational effect that they provide, which no longer has any educational subject. In this essay we will examine the advantages of study Greek and Latin in order to change a popular misconception of the uselessness and the obsolescence of these subjects.

From the 19th century and to the present time many authors have written about their educational value, insisting on teaching them in schools. The most

famous among them are F. F. Zelinsky [2], K. A. Tyuleliev [7], A. V. Podosinov [6], N. L. Katzman [4], J. A. Shichalin [8; 9] - in Russia, D. L. Sayers [13], M. Breal [1], C. A. Perrin [12] - overseas. Through the analysis of their works the reasons for studying ancient languages can be classified into three general groups: practical, cultural and educational ones. Practical reasons represent the concrete utilitarian benefits and skills, while educational ones are connected with personal development and cultural are concerned with the human level of general culture.

First consider the *practical reasons*, which Tyuleliev also called the material or utilitarian [7] and what A. Perrin called “a very good investment” [12]. To this group we can refer the linguistic, scientific, cultural, religious and literary ones.

It is commonly known, what an important role have played Latin and Greek in the formation of the modern European languages. It concerns not only the Romance languages, which are also called the Latin languages, because they are almost entirely evolved from Latin, but also other languages e.g. Russian, German and English, which had borrowed from Greek and Latin the most part of their vocabulary. So, mastering classical words one is increasing his vocabulary in all European languages. Moreover, it improves literacy, orthography and style in the mother tongue. Many dictionary words that we have to memorize can be easily verified through Latin and Greek words-ancestors [5]. Zelinskiy wrote that Latin reveals the student the anatomy of language, while the Greek – chemistry and they both explain him the pattern of language in general [2].

The terminology of all the sciences is based on Greek and Latin and is being constantly replenished by them. At the same time, the acquirement of terminology is the foundation of mastering a profession. Furthermore, no serious research in history, philosophy and literature is possible without studying the sources, most of which is written in these two languages. The same is true to the study of religious texts, because these are the main languages of Christendom.

The *cultural reasons* are caused by the rich heritage of antiquity. Classical languages introduce us to the European and universal values. Through reading ancient books we are joining to the Great Conversation as it is called by a famous philosopher Mortimer Adler, who counted 102 great ideas in them [10]. It is impossible to understand all the subsequent literature without knowing ancient literature. For example, the Russian Silver Age literature is full of allusions to it. Knowledge of ancient languages greatly develops erudition. In addition there are a lot of established Latin expressions and idioms, which must know every educated person.

The last group of *educational reasons* is the most important and can be divided into developmental and educative ones. Tyuleliev posits them as “formal”, whereas they are responsible for “the formation of the mind”, that is the mental and intellectual development [7]. He writes, “If one even completely

forget the Latin language, which he studied in gymnasium, then after all the benefit that he got from it for his mind, will remain with him forever” [7]. Dorothy Sayers considered Latin and Greek to be the “tools of learning”, which are relevant to all the three stages of learning, that she calls grammar stage, logic stage and rhetoric stage [13].

In the 19th century it was especially popular to use the classical languages for the so-called "gymnastics of the mind". Zelinsky believed that their educational peculiarity depends on their language structure and on the method of mastering them, which are quite different from those in other languages. They demand more efforts while mastering them, because they can be studied only through the “method of apperception”, on the contrary, the modern language study predominantly uses the “method of assimilation”. Classical languages “provide more food to the mind” because of the clarity of their structure on all the levels: phonetics, morphology, syntax. That promotes the mastery of causality. He thought their grammar to be “the first experience of logic” [2].

Observations over the language prepare for any scientific work, develop diligence, attentiveness and analytical thinking. Through the reading the classics are inspired ethical and moral principles.

The majority of prominent people of the past in any field were classically-educated and studied ancient languages such as a chemist D. I. Mendeleev, historian S. M. Solovjev and his son philosopher V. S. Solovjev, physicist Newton, F. Engels and K. Marx, Lenin and Stalin, A. Lincoln, J. R. R. Tolkien, A. Hamilton, Einstein, Bohr, Fermi, Pushkin, Lomonosov, Tolstoj, Dostoevsky... this list is uncountable. The great Czech educator John Amos Comenius published in 1658 the first illustrated Latin textbook and encyclopedia for children "The Visible World in Pictures" (“Orbis sensualium pictus”), that was popular for centuries.

Nowadays as in the past ancient languages are required for admission to several European universities. Some employers are willing to employ only classically educated people in key positions. The noted oil man Jean Paul Getty, considered to be one of the richest men in the 20th century, appreciated the knowledge of ancient languages to be more valuable than a degree of an MBA [14]. The same applies to the scientific community. Noted German chemistry professor and scientist Bauer preferred only classically or “scientifically” educated students. He said [12], “Give me a student who has been taught his Latin Grammar and I will answer for his Chemistry.”

In many countries and especially in Great Britain the mastery of these languages is a sign of a good education and it is highly valued. For example, the head of the British Secret Service, Jonathan Evans and the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, both received a classical education [9].

As one of the Renaissance authors compares [1], “the disciples trying only to learn ancient languages unnoticed absorb the great and noble ideas, just as the people walking in the sun, imperceptibly for themselves receive health and

color". Thus it can be concluded that the study of the Greek and Latin languages is of great educational, developmental and cultural significance for modern humankind.

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