

Magdalena Tomaszewska

| e-mail: magdalena.tomaszewska@uws.edu.pl

Uniwersytet w Siedlcach, Polska

## The Latin verb *vīdī* and its cognates in Germanic and Slavic

DOI: 10.34739/clg.2024.16.07

### **Introduction: The spread of Latin**

Although contemporarily Latin has the status of a dead language, it played the role of lingua franca in various periods of history. The language left significant imprints on the cultural heritage of pre-, inter- and post-mediaeval Europe and beyond. The article presents a brief historical account of the spread of Latin in Europe against the socio-cultural background, including language contact.

The study is a result of empirical observations. It makes use of the comparative method, and desk research methodology. For this reasons, illustrating the material involved numerous quotations.

Much of the later history of Latin is due to its beginning and its speakers, the Romans. Ancient Rome was founded c. 753 BC and in the first few centuries it did not encompass much more than what is now the city of Rome. “The earliest Rome was an insignificant city-state among a multitude of similar states in the middle of the Italian peninsula” (Janson 2002: 90). The language of the Romans, Latin, was spoken mainly in Rome. Other small states used similar languages. “Latin was only one of a number of related languages, dialects of Italic, which were spoken in the city-states of ancient Italy. At one time, some of these other Italic languages, such as Umbrian and Oscan, may have been at least as widespread and important as Latin” (Barber et al. 2009: 54). But the historical evidence suggests that the Romans also had contact with peoples speaking unrelated languages, for example, the Etruscans, who lived in the north of the Romans, see (1).

- (1) The Etruscans spoke their own language, which did not belong to the Indo-European family and which is not related to any other language which has been preserved. They used their own alphabet, and many inscriptions in Etruscan have survived. For several hundred years the Romans were very dependent on the Etruscans, both politically and economically, and they took over a great deal from them, including their alphabet. The letters in the Roman alphabet represent a slight modification of the symbols used by the Etruscans, who had in their turn borrowed the idea of writing with letters from the Greeks (Janson 2004: 12).

The Latin language is found in a few inscriptions from around 600 BC, and in fact in the case of Latin only inscriptions have survived from the centuries before around 300 BC (Janson 2002: 90–91). One of the reasons could be that the Romans were primarily farmers and soldiers and were not in need of writing longer texts.

The spread of Latin is ascribed to the Romans' latter principal activity, i.e. the army, see (2).

- (2) More or less from the beginning, the Romans had their minds set on capturing more land and subduing neighbour states, and their sphere of influence grew over the centuries. In the fourth century BC, they became the dominant power in the Italian peninsula, and towards the end of the following century they were the undisputed lords of Italy, including Sicily. They systematically expanded eastwards as well as westwards, and when the empire reached its maximal size, around AD 100, the Romans ruled over all Europe west of the Rhine (except Scotland and Ireland) and south of the Danube, all northern Africa including Egypt, and further present-day Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Albania, and a great deal more. Thus, the empire comprised everything around the Mediterranean and vast regions beyond that. This enormous power remained largely intact for another 300 years, until the fifth century AD, when the western part was dissolved through the invasion of German groups (Janson 2002: 90).

The Romans were excellent soldiers. When they conquered land, their language conquered other languages. This is not only the case of Umbrian and Oscan that eventually died out<sup>1</sup> (Barber et al. 2009: 54), but also

---

<sup>1</sup> "A few hundred years BC there were several languages in Italy with more or less well-established written forms, and a few of them certainly had more speakers than Latin had. There are extant texts in Etruscan, frequent, and it seems that not one of them was used in writing

Celtic dialects that were replaced by Latin-derived languages, for example, in the area of present-day France<sup>2</sup>, see (3).

- (3) Though it is true that one way a language can spread is by the spread and increase of the people that speak it, it is perhaps just as common for a language to spread at the expense of another language; that is, people who at one point speak language X as a group start speaking language Y. A perfect example of the latter type of spread is the present extent of the Romance languages. Most of the people who now speak these Latin-derived languages are the descendants not of the original Latin speakers, but rather of other early ethnic groups that for one reason or another, adopted Latin (or one of its derivatives) as their mother tongue. Most of France, for example, originally spoke Celtic dialects (Robinson 1992: 13).

Why would ethnic groups massively adopt Latin as their first language? The reason was that the Romans spread Latin over the territory they had conquered not only by commerce and establishing an efficient administration, e.g. appointing governors, tax collectors, judges, surveyors, customs officers (Janson 2002: 94). Their policy included rewarding soldiers who had completed their military service with parcels of land, see (4).

- (4) The soldiers naturally spoke Latin, and they and their families brought with them the language of the victors to the homelands of the vanquished, where they continued their main activity, farming. In this way islands of Latin emerged in all the other language areas. At the same time Latin was the language of the people who held power, so most people quickly learnt a bit of Latin, and after a few generations Latin had completely taken over (Janson 2004: 13).

Those who wished to protect their position, or advance in society had to speak Latin. Another factor contributing to the language's status in late antiquity was that Latin was closely linked to the new religion, Christianity.

---

after around AD 100. They may have been in use as spoken languages after that, but there are really no hints that this was so" (Janson 2002: 93).

<sup>2</sup>"Present-day France, Spain, and Portugal, as well as the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, were inhabited by peoples speaking many languages when the Romans conquered these territories in the two last centuries BC. There is evidence that in late antiquity they had mostly shifted to Latin, and the overwhelming majority of the present population speak languages that stem from Latin. Only a couple of groups stick to other languages: the Basques in northern Spain and south-western France, and the Bretons in Brittany. But the Bretons are believed to be descendants of Celts who moved in from England in late antiquity, rather than a Celtic population who kept their language intact in Roman Gaul" (Janson 2002: 93–94).

“In Rome, Christianity arrived early. When the city burned in AD 64 the adherents of the new sect were accused of arson, and the emperor Nero sent many Christians to torture and death” (Janson 2002: 95). However, the religion “increased in strength and in the fourth century, after the conversion of Constantine, it became associated with the Roman state” (Janson 2002: 95). The Emperor Constantine “gave preferential treatment to the Christians and was himself christened shortly before his death. His successors were, with a few exceptions, Christians, and by the end of the century Christianity had become the official religion of the state” (Janson 2004: 78).

Christian texts were translated from Greek to Latin at a very early period, because “many new Christians in the western part of the Roman empire were for the most part unable to read Greek, and so it became necessary to create a Christian literature in Latin” (Janson 2004: 78), which was the language used by the Christians in the western part of the empire<sup>3</sup>. One of the first Christian writers of importance who used Latin was Tertullian. “Around the end of the second century CE he wrote a number of works, one of which was a defence of the Christians called *Apologéticum*, addressed directly to the rulers who sat in judgement over them” (Janson 2004: 77).

The first attempts to translate the Bible into Latin were of varied quality (Janson 2004: 78). A complete and reliable translation of the whole Bible appeared at the beginning of the fifth century, and is described as “a monumental work that was due to the learned and hard-working Jerome. He made an entirely new translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew and revised the existing translation from the Greek of the New Testament” (Janson 2004: 78).

Thus, for historical reasons, by the sixth century “the population of south-western Europe became speakers of Latin” (Janson 2002: 95), “and from the seventh century vigorous missionary activity began to be undertaken

---

<sup>3</sup> Christianity “had originated in the eastern part of the empire, where Greek was the official language. The authors of the New Testament also wrote in Greek, and that became the language of the Church in the East” (Janson 2004: 77). What is more, the variant of Greek, i.e. the *koinē*, was “the standard literary language of the eastern Mediterranean from the time of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. This language was a modified form of the Attic dialect of Athens, which became the literary standard for the Greek-speaking world in the fifth century BC, when Athens was politically and culturally the dominant city of Greece. Athenian political dominance lasted less than a century, but the prestige of Athenian literature and of Athenian speech remained, and from it developed the *koinē*. This word means ‘shared, common, popular’, and it was indeed the common language of a large area for something like a thousand years. It is, for example, the language in which the New Testament was written” (Barber et al. 2009: 55–56).

in the north and east” (Janson 2004: 86). The extent to which Latin spread in Europe was still visible in writings of many foreign travellers in Early Modern Europe. “The practice of speaking and writing Latin was also common in the north of Europe, the Baltic countries and Russia, having already established itself in the eastern regions, particularly Poland and Hungary. (...) Poland and Hungary were frequently described as places where some knowledge of Latin was surprisingly common” (Tosi 2020: 171). For example, the travellers reported they could communicate in (a form of) Latin with people of diverse backgrounds, i.e. customs men, coach drivers, traders, innkeepers, peasants and shepherds (Tosi 2020: 171).

In England, commencing in the late 15th century and lasting for the next 400 years, “the entire English upper class was expected to have good French, decent Latin and a smattering of Ancient Greek” (Hawes 2020: 91). “Throughout the sixteenth century, Latin was ordinarily spoken by English upper classes with ease and correctness, and this was reinforced by the language becoming fashionable under Queen Elizabeth. In England, a knowledge of Latin was essential for all careers, and its study occupied most of a student’s day” (Tosi 2020: 171). For example, Oxford and Cambridge required students to speak Latin not only with their teachers (in class), but also with each other (outside of school), see Tosi (2020: 171). In fact, “Oxford and Cambridge demanded both Ancient Greek and Latin from all applicants until 1919, with Latin still required until 1960” (Hawes 2020: 91)<sup>4</sup>.

## **1. Latin and Germanic**

Although the first allusions to the Germanic tribes are preserved in the writings of Greek and Roman historians and date from about 200 BC, the earliest literary artefacts of Germanic peoples are runic inscriptions, scratched on metal, stone, bone, and occasionally wood, from after the second half of the second century AD (Robinson 1992: 16).

In the fifth century, a number of Germanic peoples: Ostrogoths and Visigoths, Sueves and Vandals, Burgundians and Franks invaded the Western Roman Empire. “Each group managed to seize power in a part of the empire, which literally fell into pieces. The last emperor in the west was deposed in

---

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, not only academia was the area where Latin prevailed for a long time. Even though vernaculars were introduced in church services after the reformation in the early sixteenth century, Latin within the Catholic Church (all over the world) was used up to the 1960s (Janson 2002: 102).

476” (Janson 2002: 99). However, military conquest did not result in diminishing the role of Latin. On the contrary, it continued to be used in speaking and writing, for everyday communication and in legal and economic contexts. Interestingly, the Germanic languages of the invaders “disappeared after some time, mostly without leaving many traces<sup>5</sup>” (Janson 2002: 99), most probably because the Germanic speakers were not numerous, “although they certainly assumed power and ownership of the land, they were surrounded by people who spoke Latin, and after a few generations they started speaking the same language as the people they ruled over” (Janson 2004: 87–88).

The only area where Latin did not supplant the language of the invaders was Britain. The invading Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, that came in the mid-fifth century, colonised England and drove the original Celtic inhabitants to the fringes of their country (i.e. to Wales and Cornwall)<sup>6</sup>. Anglo-Saxon is the substratum of English, “the vocabulary of Old English was essentially Germanic, with a handful of words from Celtic, and a number of ecclesiastical terms taken from Latin following the introduction of Roman Christianity as a result of Augustine’s mission in 597” (Jackson 2002: 10).

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire conventionally marks the beginning of the Middle Ages, also because of social, economical and political changes that followed. When the empire was dismembered, the intensity of commerce, communication, education, etc. was reduced. The urban areas lost their importance and were depopulated. “The dominant economic pattern became self-subsistence, and in many areas the only political entity of any real importance was the local manor or estate” (Janson 2002: 100). School education was restricted to monasteries and churches, so in many areas only monks and clergymen had the skills to read and write. “In the seventh century,

---

<sup>5</sup> It is worth adding, though, that one such language from the East Germanic group, i.e. Gothic, survived “as a written language, mainly through a translation of parts of the Bible that is still preserved in a manuscript from the fifth century, but as a spoken language, Gothic disappeared just like the languages of the other invaders” (Janson 2002: 99). The mentioned portions of biblical translations into Gothic are ascribed to Wulfila (c. 311-c. 383), who was the apostle and bishop of Goths. Generally, Gothic is the most archaic representative of the Germanic group in extensive specimens (Bennett 1980: 1).

<sup>6</sup> Sanders (2010: 49) speculates that if the battle of Kalkriese in the late summer of AD 9 had turned out differently, “Germanic languages would likely have survived only in Scandinavia, where there was little Roman influence, and possibly in present-day Holland. There would have been no Germanic-speaking Angles and Saxons on the German North Sea coast to invade and settle the British Isles four centuries later, so that no Germanic language would have arrived on that island to become the ancestor of English. In the rest of Europe, hundreds of years of Roman domination effectively erased the local, often Celtic and Germanic, languages and replaced them with Latin”.

western Europe was without any strong political power and well-nigh without any organization at all apart from the Christian Church” (Janson 2002: 100). Hence, Latin survived as a means of written communication, see (5).

- (5) Even though the empire disappeared Latin remained the only written language within the old boundaries, and even beyond them, for a long time. Throughout the sixth century there was a comparatively large output in writing, and the authors had mostly learnt to write in the classical manner. In the seventh and eighth centuries very few texts were produced, and their language is often quite strange. The writers evidently wanted to write in the classical manner, but their lack of education made that impossible, and what they wrote down is sometimes not even comprehensible (Janson 2002: 100).

The situation improved around 800, when the schools of the Christian Church were reformed. More people learnt how to read and write Latin. “By the twelfth century Latin was used very extensively in writing all over Europe, also in several countries that had never belonged to the Roman Empire, such as present-day Germany, Poland, and Denmark” (Janson 2002: 101), see (6).

- (6) Strangely enough, Latin became the most important written language and the international spoken language in virtually the whole of Europe, and over a much larger area than the western part of the Roman empire, where the language had been spoken in antiquity. Latin retained that pre-eminence for the best part of a millennium, and this explains why it has had such an enormous influence on almost all branches of European culture (Janson 2004: 86).

## **2. Latin and Slavic**

The first historical mentions of the Slavic tribes date back to the first half of the sixth century<sup>7</sup>, “and the earliest Slavic inscriptions and manuscripts that still exist today are no older than the tenth century” (Langston 2018: 1397).

Probably due to the invasion of the Huns into Europe and the first phase of the Great Migrations in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, the Slavs began to spread into territories bordering the Eastern Roman Empire in the

---

<sup>7</sup> Andersen (2021: 13) provides the date AD 528, whereas Langston (2018: 1397) states that the Slavs were mentioned in various works by the Byzantine historian Procopius, and the historian Jordanes, who described the Slavs “in his history of the Goths (*De origine actibusque Getarum*, ca. 550), where he describes a group of three related tribes, the Venethi, Antes, and Sclaveni, inhabiting a large area extending from the source of the Vistula river in the north to the Danube in the south, and reaching to the Dnieper river in the east”.

sixth century (hence their relatively late appearance in the historical records). “During the sixth century other groups of Slavs were expanding to the north and west into the areas of present-day Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Germany, as attested by archaeological remains and mentions in written sources” (Langston 2018: 1397). In the same period, the expansion of Slavic cultures to the east in Ukraine is also attested by archaeological evidence, but no written sources are available in this case (Langston 2018: 1398). During the expansion, the language of the Slavs spread across Europe from the Baltic to the Aegean, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, from the Elbe and Saale to the Volga.

The displacement of Proto-Slavic peoples from their original homeland probably resulted in their mixing with different groups. Their rapid expansion into such a large geographic area may have involved assimilation of the other groups (as opposed to normal population growth), which is to say that the original populations living in the mentioned areas adopted the language of the Slavs. It has been suggested that Slavic functioned as a *lingua franca* in the ethnically mixed region<sup>8</sup>, which is supported by its high degree of homogeneity during the time of expansion, and the relatively long period of common linguistic developments after the dispersal of the Slavic peoples throughout eastern Europe. “Scholars generally agree that dialectal differences were probably not significant enough to impede communication up to about the year 1000, so that we may still speak of some sort of Slavic linguistic unity before this time” (Langston 2018: 1398).

Even though the oldest written records of Slavic date back to the tenth century, the earliest manuscripts are close to what can be reconstructed for Proto-Slavic. They are written in Old Church Slav(on)ic<sup>9</sup> (OCS), which “is handed down in two writing systems, glagolitic (from *glagolъ* ‘word’) and Cyrillic” (Beekes 2011: 369), see (7).

- (7) The development of this literary language is attributed to the brothers Constantine (who later took the name Cyril) and Methodius, who were chosen by

---

<sup>8</sup> Andersen (2021: 12–13) sketches various approaches to the (linguistic) prehistory of the Slavs and the Slavic expansion in the early Middle Ages. His own explanation of the formation of the Common Slavic *koiné* assumes that language contacts played a significant role before, during and after the expansion.

<sup>9</sup> Old Church Slavonic “is preserved in several manuscripts and a few inscriptions originating from the regions of the Moravian Empire, situated between the Vistula River and the easternmost extent of Carolingian influence, and the Bulgarian Empire, extending from the lower reaches of Macedonia in the south up beyond the Danube in the north” (*EIEOL-OCS, Series Introduction*).



the Byzantine emperor Michael III to undertake a mission to the Slavs living in Moravia around 862. Although they were from a Greek family, the brothers were presumably bilingual in Greek and the eastern South Slavic dialect spoken in the area of their native town of Thessaloniki. Constantine/Cyril reportedly developed an alphabet for writing the language, and he and Methodius began translating biblical and liturgical texts necessary for their missionary work (Langston 2018: 1398–1399).

The glagolitic script is older and was possibly designed by Cyril about 863. “It was soon replaced by Cyrillic, which is now used for Russian and Bulgarian<sup>10</sup>. This alphabet originated at the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century and derives mainly from uncial writing. The origin of the glagolitic system is still disputed” (Beekes 2011: 369), because it is not modelled on a single writing system. Instead “it seems that Constantine/Cyril wanted to create a unique alphabet for Slavic. Some of the letters appear to be based on Greek, Hebrew, Samaritan, or Latin characters, while for others no source can be reliably determined” (Langston 2018: 1399).

The degree to which the oldest documented Slavic dialect preserved in manuscripts resembles the actual spoken language of the region is disputed. According to Bartula (2001: 19), Old Church Slavonic was not a language for daily communication, but a means to translate the Bible from Greek, first the Gospel, see Bartula (2001: 9), and then the other parts, see Bartula (2001: 11). This is the reason why Old Church Slavonic contains Greek loanwords, and shows traces of lexical and phraseological borrowings. Also, see (8).

- (8) It is often assumed that the language is the same as that which was spoken in the centuries preceding the work of Cyril and Methodius; but by the time the extant manuscripts were written, the actual spoken language was beginning to diverge from the written language. Nevertheless, the written language continued to exert an influence of its own, even beyond the regions of its origin. For example, in the 11th century one finds in Old Russian, on the geographical extremity of the Slavic community, constant stylistic and lexical borrowings from OCS as its own literature develops. (EIEOL-OCS, *Series Introduction, Linguistic Heredity*).

---

<sup>10</sup> Other Slavic languages whose writing systems are based on the Cyrillic script are Serbian, Macedonian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian, whereas the writing systems of Polish, Czech, Slovak, Wendish, Croatian, and Slovenian are based on the Latin alphabet.

Hence, Old Church Slavonic enjoyed a similar status to Latin. The preserved documents “were produced in a religious tradition that used Old Church Slavonic as the liturgical medium very much the way Latin was used in the Roman Catholic Church” (EIEOL-OCS, *Series Introduction*). Similarly to Latin, Old Church Slavonic was prestigious and its letter shape influenced the written forms of indigenous vernaculars:

- (9) (...) język ten jako liturgiczny stał się na długie wieki językiem piśmiennym wszystkich Słowian prawosławnych: Bułgarów, Serbów, Rosjan, Ukraińców i Białorusinów, a po części nawet katolickich Chorwatów — i odegrał u nich rolę taką samą, jak na Zachodzie łacina, a nawet o tyle większą, że utrzymał się w niej dłużej — po części aż do XIX w. — i wywarł znaczny wpływ na kształtowanie się u tych ludów języków literackich rodzimych opartych na żywej ludowej podstawie (Lehr-Splawiński and Bartula 1973: 6–7).

[...] as a liturgical language, Old Church Slavonic for long centuries became a language of scripture for all Slavs in the Eastern Orthodox Church: Bulgarians, Serbs, Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians, and partly even Catholic Croatians — and played among them the same role as Latin in the West, and even bigger because it maintained its role for longer — partly until the 19th century — and greatly influenced the development of those peoples’ literary vernaculars rooted in the living folk tradition. (trans. – MT)]

In fact, according to Bartula (2001: 14), the scopes of the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets correspond to the zones of former influences of the eastern culture (which he calls ‘Byzantine-Church-Slavonic’), and the western culture (which he calls ‘Roman-Latin’).

Speakers of Latin, Germanic and Slavic may have formed neighbouring speech communities. Contact between the three languages, especially Germanic and Slavic, is attested in new lexical items reconstructable for pre-expansion and expansion periods, see Andersen (2021), and Late Common Slavic. For example, some items of everyday life, handcraft, political and military vocabulary are traceable to Germanic (Sakhno 2018: 1578–1580), whereas ecclesiastical vocabulary shows traces of Latin and Germanic influences, see (10).

- (10) The OCS vocabulary, for its part, shows evidence of previous missionary work which had converted many of the Slavs to the Christian doctrine espoused by the Western Church. This was achieved primarily through the work of German

priests, so that one finds a core Church vocabulary in OCS derived from Latin or German. (...) Other terms were literal translations, or calques, of their German counterparts (*EIEOL-OCS, Series Introduction, Language Contact*).

### 3. Gr. *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Goth. *wait*, OCS *vědě*

In the light of contact between the ancient languages, i.e. Greek and Latin, and the oldest representatives of the Germanic and Slavic languages, i.e. Gothic and Old Church Slavonic, respectively, it is interesting to synthesise some overlaps between the cognate verbs: Gr. *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Goth. *wait*, and OCS *vědě*. Their partial conjugations are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The singular and plural indicative active forms of Sanskrit *vēda*, Greek *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Gothic *wait*, and Old Church Slavonic *vědě*

| PIE                                   | Skt.          | Gr.           | Lat.                  | Goth.        | OCS           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| * <i>uóid-h<sub>2</sub>e</i> 'I know' | <i>vēda</i>   | <i>oīda</i>   | <i>vīdī</i> 'I saw'   | <i>wait</i>  | <i>vědě</i>   |
| * <i>uóid-th<sub>2</sub>e</i>         | <i>véttha</i> | <i>oīstha</i> | <i>vīdistī</i>        | <i>waist</i> | <i>věsi</i>   |
| * <i>uóid-e</i>                       | <i>vēda</i>   | <i>oīde</i>   | <i>vīdit</i>          | <i>wait</i>  | <i>věstъ</i>  |
| * <i>uid-mé</i>                       | <i>vidmá</i>  | <i>ídmen</i>  | <i>vīdimus</i>        | <i>witum</i> | <i>věmъ</i>   |
| * <i>uid-(h<sub>1</sub>)é</i>         | <i>vidá</i>   | <i>íste</i>   | <i>vīdistis</i>       | <i>wituþ</i> | <i>věste</i>  |
| * <i>uid-r/ēr</i>                     | <i>vidúr</i>  | <i>ísāsi</i>  | <i>vīdēre, -ērunt</i> | <i>witun</i> | <i>vědetъ</i> |

Sours: based on Beekes 2011: 265

Preliminary observations about the data can be summarised as follows: (a) the accent in the verbal forms was mobile only in Sanskrit. It falls on the stem in the singular, but on the inflections in the plural. In other languages, it was fixed on the first / stem syllable; (b) all the verbs belong to the so called athematic conjugation – the inflections are added without a thematic vowel, directly to the root, which is explicitly shown in the PIE reconstructions in the first column in Table 1; (c) in the case of the Sanskrit, Greek and Gothic forms, the root in the singular differs from the one in the plural, which can be explained by qualitative vowel gradation (apophony, ablaut). Towards late Proto-Indo-European, morphemes could have ablaut variants (allomorphs), see Weinsberg (1990, §35.1). Hence, the same morpheme, e.g. a root, could occur in variants depending on whether it surfaced in words that were products of the word-formation or inflectional processes. The alternants

differed in the quality of the root vowel, see (12); (d) in the case of Skt. *véda* and Goth. *wait*, the first and third person singular forms show syncretism.

Gr. *oīda* ‘I know’ is the second perfect form, hence the characteristic inflections<sup>11</sup> and stem gradation (the singular stem is different from the plural one). Morphologically, the form is rather isolated because of the lack of the reduplicating syllable, which otherwise was a hallmark of the Greek perfect, see Smyth (1920: §561, §573) and Beekes (2011: 265), who states that *\*uoid-h<sub>2</sub>e* ‘I know’ is “a notable exception”. Some accounts assume that “the reduplicative syllable had already been lost by the time of late PIE” (Hogg and Fulk 2011: §6.131). Semantically, the Greek second perfect often has the force of a present, as in *πέποιθα* ‘trust’, cf. *πέπεικα* ‘have persuaded’ (Smyth 1920: §568). Since the verb is cognate with Lat. *video* ‘I see’, a common explanation of its semantic development is that the sense ‘I know’ originates from the sense ‘I have seen’ (Hogg and Fulk 2011: §6.131), or ‘I have found out’ (Smyth 1920: §795). In early Greek the perfect was restricted to describing the state of the subject, and not the resultant state of the object. If such an assumption is taken into account, the semantics of Gr. *oīda* seems to match the perfect forms in other languages, see (11).

(11) For example, the perfect *\*woid-* ‘know’ is reconstructed from the following correspondence:

*\*woid-* ‘know’: Sanskrit *véda*, Greek *oīda*, Gothic *wait*, Old Church Slavonic *vědě*

In all the languages in which it appears, *\*woid-* functions semantically and syntactically as a *present* tense, although showing the characteristic PIE perfect endings and formation (including o-grade of the root). In order to connect it with the normal use of the perfect in early Greek, the semantics of *\*woid-* could be glossed as ‘he has found out and consequently is now in a state of knowing’ (the same root *\*weid-* is found in verbs meaning ‘see’ or ‘find’ in IE languages:

*\*weid-* ‘see, find’: Sanskrit *vindāti*, Greek *eídon*, Latin *uideō*, Armenian *gtanem*). (Clackson 2007: 121).

In daughter languages, the perfect has mostly been reinterpreted as a tense with past reference, and “this shift to past reference offers support

---

<sup>11</sup> The dialectal, stylistic, phonological, etc. variants of the lexeme are discussed in Smyth (1920: §794-§799).

for the notion that the perfect originally referred to the state *following an action in the past*, and was not just a stative” (Clackson 2007: 121).

Phonologically, in terms of the root vowel, the PIE perfect tense had an accented \*-ó- in the root in the singular, and a zero grade in the plural (Beekes 2011: 265). The set of alternants Gr. *ει: οι* (strong grade) and *ι* (weak grade) is one of the chief vowel grades and is found not only in the perfect. For example, OED (*wit* v.<sup>1</sup>) lists the following members of the word family of Gr. *οἴδα*: *εἶδον* (<\*έφιδον) ‘I saw’, *εἶδος* ‘appearance, shape’, *ἀείδελος* ‘invisible’, *εἰδέναι* ‘to know’, and *ιδεῖν* ‘to see’, *ιδέα* ‘form’, *ἄιστος* ‘unseen, unknown’. Also, see (12). Notably, the weak grade was characteristic of verbal adjectives, hence Gr. *ιστέος*, Lat. *vīsus*<sup>12</sup> ‘seen’.

- (12) *πειθ-ω* ‘I persuade’,  
*πέ-πεικ-α* ‘have persuaded’, *πέ-ποιθ-α* ‘I trust’,  
*πιθ-ανός* ‘persuasive’  
(Based on Smyth 1920: §36, §568)
- λείπ-ω* ‘I leave’,  
*λέ-λοιπ-α* ‘I have left’,  
*λιπ-εῖν* ‘to leave’  
(Smyth 1920: §35a)

Lat. *vīdī* ‘I saw’ is also a perfect form. Similarly to Gr. *οἴδα*, it lacks the reduplicating syllable. Unlike the Greek counterpart, however, Lat. *vidēre* ‘to see’ has not developed the sense of knowing, hence *videō* ‘I see’, *vīdī* ‘I saw’, etc. Phonologically, the root vowel in *vīdī* can be explained as follows: “In initial syllables after *v* a process of dissimilation changed *oi* to *ei* in Old Latin, which later became *ī*” (Palmer 1954: 217). The stem *vīd-* was generalised in all forms.

The Latin perfect as a whole is traceable to the Indo-European aorist and perfect formations and shows Latin-specific innovations. It encompasses (a) the type with reduplication (the old perfect as in Gr. *λέ-λοιπ-α*), (b) the type with a lengthened root vowel<sup>13</sup>, as in *video* : *vīdī* (within the Latin sys-

<sup>12</sup> Palmer (1954: 230) reconstructs *vīsus* < \**vīssos* < \**vid-tos* and explains that *s* “has resulted from the reduction of *ss* after long vowels and diphthongs”, Pokorny (1959: 1125) suggests that the long root vowel is a result of analogy: “Partiz. *vīsus* (wie *vīsus*, -*us* ‘das Sehen, Anblick’ mit *ī* für *ī* nach *vīdī* und *vīso*)”.

<sup>13</sup> One subgroup of this type, i.e. Lat. *vēni*, *sēdi*, *lēgi*, *ēdi*, corresponds to Germanic preterites with a long root vowel in the plural, i.e. *qēmum* ‘we came’, *sētum* ‘we sat’, etc. (Palmer 1954: 272).

tem, “the lengthened grade of the perfect in all these corresponds to the normal grade of the present” (Palmer 1954: 272)), (c) the *s*-perfect type (which corresponds to the sigmatic aorists in other languages. “Such aorists in Indo-European had a lengthened grade of the root in the indicative singular active and the zero grade in the other forms of the indicative, but Latin generalized the form with the lengthened vowel” (Palmer 1954: 273)), (d) the type in *-vī* (this type of perfect, most characteristic of Latin, is not found elsewhere).

Similarly, the inflections of Latin perfect seem to have been pieced together from various sources and correspond to the middle voice endings in e.g. Greek.

- (13) The IE. perfect was an ‘intransitive’ tense expressing a state persisting in the person of the subject (...). The inflexions of the Latin perfect are also traceable to all intransitive endings which are reflected in the middle voice of Greek and Indo-Iranian and also in the Hittite *hi-* conjugation (Palmer 1954: 274).

But both Greek and Latin developed periphrastic perfects. In the case of Greek, it happened at a relatively early date. “By the time of the Koiné and the New Testament, the use of the synthetic perfect had become severely diminished” (Drinka 2017: 103). Its retention, characteristic of the writings of John the Evangelist, seems to represent a stylistic choice to create a solemn, expressive tone. “In many of the synthetic perfects used in the NT, the perfect imparts a heightened emotive tenor, an air of sacrality” (Drinka 2017: 103). The tone of sacredness achieved by means of the synthetic perfect was replicated in many translations of the New Testament, also through the periphrastic perfect. According to Drinka (2017: 103), this notion of sacredness played a crucial role in establishing and reinforcing the use of the perfect in the languages of populations that adopted Christianity.

The Indo-European perfect is believed to be the source of the Germanic preterite of strong verbs. Such verbs are characterised, for example, by vowel grades (the Germanic ablaut). However, “there are numerous Gmc. strong verbs with no convincing IE etymology” (Fulk 2018: 256). According to Ringe and Taylor (2014: 349), “it appears that OE had already developed to the point at which many strong verbs (though by no means all) were just ‘irregular verbs’ whose inflection had to be memorized”. Also, Germanic strong verbs show a diachronic tendency to be diminished, “in the course of

the later Middle Ages strong verbs in all the Gmc. languages were extensively refashioned as weak ones or passed out of use altogether” (Fulk 2018: 256).

Due to the alternations of the root vowels, Gmc. *\*witan* is classified as a preterite-present verb (e.g. the root vowels in Goth. *wait* ‘I know’ and *witum* ‘we know’ are attested in the first class of strong verbs, e.g. Goth. *staig* ‘I ascended’ and *stigum* ‘we ascended’). “Though most of these verbs can be assigned to one or another of the strong ablaut classes, there are so few of them, and they exhibit so many anomalies, that it makes more sense to treat them entirely in their own terms” (Ringe 2006: 260). The Germanic preterite-present verbs are: Goth. *wait* ‘knows’, *lais* ‘understands’, *daug* ‘avails, is good for’, *gaders* ‘dares’, *kann* ‘knows’, *þarf* ‘needs’, *man* ‘thinks’ (*ga-man* ‘remembers’), *binah* ‘is permitted’ (*ga-nah* ‘suffices’), *skal* ‘shall, is obliged’, *mag* ‘can’, *gamōt* ‘finds room’ (OE *mōt* ‘is allowed to, may’), *ōg* ‘fears’, *aih* ‘owns’, Oldcel. *ann* ‘loves’ (OE *ann* ‘grants’), and their cognates. The question how these verbs acquired present meaning is usually explained as follows:

- (14) given that the perfect designates past events which are relevant to a present state (“has dreaded”), it is plain enough how the present element of its semantics should in such instances have come to dominate (“is afraid”). In actuality, *wáit* is the only one of these verbs in which the rationale for the word’s semantic development is pellucid, though it is perhaps not too difficult to see how the sense ‘have thought (and still think)’ should result in ‘remember’ (Go. *ga-man*, like Lat. *meminī*; cf. Gk. *μέμνη* ‘wish’ and Skt. pres. *mányatē* ‘thinks’), and how ‘have come under obligation’ (cf. Old Lith. *skelù* ‘am culpable’) should result in ‘shall’ (Fulk 2018: 321).

Most of the verbs that survived into modern times became modal verbs, such as Eng. *can*, *dare*, *shall*, *may*, *must*, *ought*, etc.

The second person singular inflections in Germanic *\*witan* show an overlap with those in Greek and Latin, e.g. Gr. *οἶσθα*, Goth. *waist*, OE *wāst* ‘you know’ and Lat. *vīdīstī* ‘you saw’. Whereas in the Greek form the cluster *-st-* is a regular phonological development, the *-t* in the Germanic forms is usually interpreted as a later addition influenced by the 2 sg. pret. inflection *-t* (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 301, Fulk 2018: 322).

Traces of the Indo-European perfect in Slavic are not numerous. “The clearest example in Slavic of an inherited perfect is *vědě* from *\*woida-i* ‘I know’. It has the present-marking particle *-i* added, as does Latin *vīdī*. In Slavic, the rest of the paradigm is that of a regular athematic active” (Darden

2018: 1996). However, this one particular form is the only formation that can be assigned to the Indo-European synthetic perfect. “The IE perfect formation survives in OCS only in the form *вѣдѣ* ‘I know’ < \*voidai, corresponding to Lat. *vidi*, Grk. *(w)oida*, Skt. *veda*” (EIEOL-OCS: §24.1). Also, Bartula (2001: 100) informs that OCS *vědě* functions as a present tense form, side by side with the regular OCS *věmъ* ‘I know’, and Beekes (2011: 266) confirms that “OCS has *vědě* < \*-a-i, with an added \*-i; the other endings are those of the present”. The periphrastic perfect in Old Church Slavonic was formed by means of the present tense finite forms of the verb for ‘to be’ and the *l*-participle (EIEOL-OCS: §24.1).

#### 4. Eng. *wit*, *wot*, *wist*, *weet*, etc.

The Germanic root *wait-*, *wit-* developed not only into verbal formations, but also nominal and adjectival ones. One of the oldest, the adjective *wise*, as in *wise (old) man* and *world-wise*, and the noun *wise*, as in *otherwise*, have been attested from the Old English period (OED, *wise adj.*, *wise n.*<sup>1</sup>). The noun *wis*, as in *to wis(se)*, *mid wisse* ‘for certain’ died out in the late 14th c. (OED, *wis n.*). The noun *wite* ‘a wise man, one of the witan<sup>14</sup>’ (OE *wita*) died out in the late 18th c. (OED, *wite n.*).

The verbal forms show a considerable amount of diachronic variation, see (15), but most of them either died out or became obsolete, archaic or are restricted to dialectal use.

- (15) The original conjugation, typically represented by *to wit* or *wete*, present *I* and *he wot*, *thou wost*, *we*, *ye*, and *they wite*, past tense *wist*, past participle *witen*, presented many apparent anomalies, and various attempts at normalization were made by means of analogical formations and irregular extension of the use of certain forms, with the result that new infinitive and present-stem forms came into existence (OED, *wit v.*<sup>1</sup>).

The verb *wit* is the etymon of the new verbs *wot*, *wist* and *weet*. The stem *wot* (from the earlier and northern *wāt*) was generalised to other parts of the verb. The substitution occurred first in the second person singular and the plural of the present tense, “and appears in northern texts from the end

---

<sup>14</sup> The witan was the council of the Anglo-Saxon kings. The body’s responsibility was to advise the king on all matters when he asked for an opinion.



of the 13th century” (OED, *wot* v.). New forms of the verb emerged in the subsequent centuries: *wotest* and *woteth* (*wotis*) appeared in the 14th, the infinitive *woten* early in the 15th, and its variants *wotte*, *wote*, *wot*, and the present participle *wotting* in the 16th c., the past tense *wotted* is an archaism of the 19th c. (OED, *wot* v.). Also, the first attestation of the new verb *wist* is ascribed to the late 16th c. (OED, *wist* v.). On the contrary, more or less at the same time, the verb *weet* started to become obsolete, see (16).

- (16) From the middle of the 16th cent., if not earlier, the form *weet* seems to be obsolete in ordinary speech, but down to the second decade of the 17th cent. it was frequent as a literary archaism (chiefly poetic), as attributed in the drama to rustic speakers, and as a variant of *wit* in the phrases *to do* or *give* (a person) *to wit*, (that is) *to wit*. The archaistic use in the 16th and early 17th cent. was confined to the infinitive, the plural present, and the present participle; but the poets of the 18th cent. and later, who have used the word in imitation of Spenser, have often treated it as a regular verb, with 1st singular present *I weet*, and inflections *weets*, *weeted* (OED, *weet* v.<sup>1</sup>).

OE *witan* survives to a degree in archaic phrases such as *let wit* ‘let (a person) know (a thing)’, *to wit* ‘to be sure, as one may know, truly, indeed’ and ‘that is, namely’, *God wot* ‘God knows’, see OED (*wit* v.<sup>1</sup>), but was generally replaced by *know* (OE *cnāwan*), which comes from the same Indo-European root as *can* (OE *cunnan*).

## 5. Pol. *wiedzieć* ‘to know’

In the context of the phrase *to do to wit* ‘cause (a person) to know, make known to, inform’ (OED, *wit* v.<sup>1</sup>), which occurred in the 13th c., it is interesting to note that such an idiom functioned in Old Polish. According to SPJS (*wiedzieć* (25)), *dać, dawać wiedzieć (komuś)* was used in the sense ‘inform (somebody)’. Since the phrase rendered Lat. *notum facere, nuntiare*, as in *Anjoł Maryjej **wiedzieć dał** syna począć* (c1400), it was possibly a partial calque of *notum facere*.

The Polish verb *wiedzieć* ‘to know’ is one of four ancient athematic verbs inherited from Proto-Slavic. The most irregular of the group is the verb for ‘to be’. Also the three remaining ones, i.e. *\*dati* ‘to give’, *\*vĕděti* ‘to know’ and *\*jasti* ‘to eat’, preserve some anomalies. According to Kuraszek (1972: 146), the Proto-Slavic forms, e.g. *\*dasi – \*dastъ – \*daste*, *\*vĕsi – vĕstъ – vĕste*, were replaced by *dasz – da – dacie*, *wiesz – wie – wiecie*, etc. in pre-

literary times due to analogy to other verbs in *-sz*, *-Ø*, *-cie*. In other words, the third person singular *-t* is preserved only in the form *jest* 'is'. Also the third person plural forms *dadzą*, *wiedzą*, *jedzą* have the extension *-dz-* through analogy to such verbs as *chodzą* 'they go, walk', *siedzą* 'they sit', *widzą* 'they see' (Kuraszkiewicz 1972: 146). The present indicative active forms of Pol. *wiedzieć* 'to know' are provided in (17).

|      |                              |                      |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| (17) | sg. 1. <i>wie-m</i> 'I know' | pl. 1. <i>wie-my</i> |
|      | 2. <i>wie-sz</i>             | 2. <i>wie-cie</i>    |
|      | 3. <i>wie</i>                | 3. <i>wiedz-q</i>    |

According to Klemensiewicz (1976: 114), such forms affected the shape of the present indicative of other Polish verbs, such as *umieć* 'to be able, can', *rozumieć* 'to understand', *śmieć* 'to dare', which in the oldest epoch were conjugated as: *umieję*, *umiejesz*, *umieje*, *umiejemy*, *umiejecie*, *umiejq*, etc. and due to analogy to *wiem* and syncope of *-je-* were remodelled to *umiem*, *umiesz*, *umie*, *umiemy*, *umiecie*. Only the 3rd pl. *umiejq* remained unchanged. A similar development affected the verb *znać* 'to know', e.g. *znaję* – *znajesz* – *znaje* changed to *znam* – *znasz* – *zna* (Małeckie 1863: §371).

Interestingly, the verbs *widzieć* and *znać* are cognate with Gmc. *\*witan* (Goth. *wait* 'knows') and *\*kunnan* (Goth. *kann* 'knows'), whereas the other verbs express the notions of ability (*umieć*), understanding and thinking (*rozumieć*), and being bold (*śmieć*), that is the same notions as the Germanic preterite-present verbs: Goth. *mag* 'can', Goth. *lais* 'understands', Goth. *man* 'thinks', Goth. *ga-man* 'remembers', and Goth. *gadars* 'dares'.

## Conclusions

The present contribution is a sketch of the socio-cultural background against which Latin, both in written and spoken form, developed from a minority language to a global lingua franca that left imprints on the cultural heritage of pre-, inter- and post-mediaeval Europe and beyond. Mutual relationships between communities speaking Latin, Germanic and Slavic are documented in history, though the recorded contacts between Latin and Germanic, and Latin and Slavic occurred at different times and followed different scenarios.

Latin conquered the languages of the Germanic tribes invading the Western Roman Empire on the continental Europe in the fifth century AD. On the other hand, the Slavs had contact with the Western and Eastern Roman

Empires, but at a later time. Old Church Slavonic became a liturgical language that enjoyed a similar status to Latin in the Roman Catholic Church. Language contact between Latin, Germanic and Slavic is especially evident in Old Church Slavonic ecclesiastical vocabulary.

It seems that due to language contact, the cognate verbs: Gr. *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Goth. *wait*, and OCS *vědě*, show some peculiar overlaps. In each of the languages, the relevant verb has language-specific irregularities, e.g. in Greek, it lacks the reduplicating syllable; in Latin, the verb is not attested with the sense of knowing; in Old Church Slavonic, only one form can be ascribed as descendant from Indo-European perfect, i.e. *vědě* (which structurally matches the Latin counterpart one to one). On the other hand, some forms are unexpectedly similar (e.g. 2nd sg. *-st* in Gr. *oĩσθα*, Goth. *waist*, OE *wāst* 'you know' and Lat. *vīdīstī* 'you saw').

The root of the Germanic verb developed in English not only into verbal formations, but also nominal and adjectival ones. OE *witan* 'to know' survives to a degree in archaic phrases, but was generally replaced by the verb *know* (OE *cnāwan*), which comes from the same Indo-European root as *can* (OE *cunnan*).

The Polish verb *wiedzieć* 'to know' is one of four ancient athematic verbs inherited from Proto-Slavic. It affected the shape of the present indicative of verbs such as *umieć* 'to be able, can', *rozumieć* 'to understand', *śmieć* 'to dare', and *znać* 'to know' (the latter also comes from the same Indo-European root as Eng. *can*). Altogether the verbs that underwent changes due to the influence of *wiedzieć* correspond notionally to preterite present verbs, such as Goth. *wait* 'knows', *kann* 'knows', *mag* 'can', *lais* 'understands', *man* 'thinks', *ga-man* 'remembers', and *gadars* 'dares'.

## Literature

Andersen H. (2021): *On the formation of the Common Slavic koiné*, in: *New Perspectives on the Early Slavs and the Rise of Slavic: Contact and Migrations*, Tomáš Klír, Vít Boček, Nicolas Jansens (eds.), Heidelberg, p. 11–42.

Barber C., Beal J.C., Shaw P.A. (2009): *The English Language. A Historical Introduction* (2nd ed.), Cambridge.

Bartuła C. (2001): *Podstawowe wiadomości z gramatyki staro-cerkiewno-słowiańskiej na tle porównawczym*, Warszawa.

Beekes R.S.P. (2011): *Comparative Indo-European Linguistics. An Introduction* (2nd ed.), Amsterdam / Philadelphia.

Bennett W.H. (1980): *An Introduction to the Gothic Language*, New York.

- Clackson J. (2007): *Indo-European Linguistics: An Introduction, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics*, Cambridge.
- Darden B.J. (2018): *Balto-Slavic morphology*, in: J. Klein, B. Joseph, & M. Fritz (eds.), *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, Vol. 3, Berlin / Boston, p. 1985–2000.
- Fulk R.D. (2018): *A Comparative Grammar of the Early Germanic Languages, Studies in Germanic Linguistics*, Vol. 3, Amsterdam / Philadelphia.
- Hawes J. (2020): *The Shortest History of England*, Exeter.
- Hogg R.M., Fulk R.D. (2011): *A Grammar of Old English*, Vol. 2, *Morphology*, Chichester.
- Jackson H. (2002): *Lexicography. An Introduction*, London / New York.
- Janson T. (2002): *Speak. A short history of languages*, Oxford.
- Janson T. (2004): *A Natural History of Latin* (N. Vincent & M.D. Sørensen, Trans.), Oxford.
- Klemensiewicz Z. (1976): *Historia języka polskiego*, Warszawa.
- Krause T.B., & Slocum J. (2003): *Old Church Slavonic Online (EIEOL-OCS)*. Linguistics Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/eieol/ocsol>, access date: 23.VI.2024.
- Kuraszkiewicz W. (1972): *Gramatyka historyczna języka polskiego*, Warszawa.
- Langston K. (2018): *The documentation of Slavic*, in: J. Klein, B. Joseph, & M. Fritz (eds.), *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, Vol. 3, Berlin / Boston, p. 1397–1413.
- Lehr-Spławiński T. & Bartula C. (1973): *Zarys gramatyki języka staro-cerkiewno-słowiańskiego*, Wrocław.
- Małecki A. (1863): *Gramatyka języka polskiego. Większa*, Lwów, <https://pola.pl/preview/0dea085b-2e19-4cee-bc92-35e7a6afbf6a>, access date: 23.VI.2024.
- Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, Oxford, <https://www.oed.com/>, access date: 23.06.2024.
- Palmer L.R. (1954): *The Latin Language*, London.
- Pokorny J. (1959): *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vols. 1-3, Bern / München.
- Ringe D.R. (2006): *From Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic. A Linguistic History of English*, Vol. 1, Oxford.
- Ringe D. & Taylor A. (2014): *The Development of Old English. A Linguistic History of English*, Vol. 2, Oxford.
- Robinson O.W. (1992): *Old English and its closest relatives. A survey of the earliest Germanic Languages*, Stanford.
- Sakhno S. (2018): *The Lexicon of Slavic*, in: J. Klein, B. Joseph, & M. Fritz (eds.), *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, Vol. 3, Berlin / Boston, p. 1571–1585.
- Sanders R.H. (2010): *German: Biography of a Language*, Oxford.

*Słownik pojęciowy języka staropolskiego* (SPJS), Instytut Języka Polskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk, <https://spjs.ijp.pan.pl/>, access date: 23.VI.2024.

Smyth H.W. (1920): *A Greek Grammar for Colleges*, Perseus Digital Library, the Department of Classical Studies, Tufts University, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Smyth+grammar&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0007>, access date: 23.VI.2024.

Tosi A. (2020): *Language and the Grand Tour. Linguistic Experiences of Travelling in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge.

## Łaciński czasownik *vīdī* oraz jego odpowiedniki w językach germańskich i słowiańskich

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł przedstawia krótki rys historyczny rozprzestrzeniania się łaciny w Europie na tle społeczno-kulturowym, w tym kontaktów językowych. Łacina odcisnęła znaczące piętno na dziedzictwie kulturowym przed-, między- i późnośredniowiecznego świata, ale nie była jedynym językiem związanym z prestiżem, religią i edukacją w dawnych czasach. Artykuł szkicuje podobieństwa, wzajemne relacje i kontakty między łaciną, greką, językami germańskimi i słowiańskimi (poświadczane w dokumentach, leksyce i systemach pisma tych ostatnich). W perspektywie mikro, niniejsze opracowanie koncentruje się na morfologicznych i semantycznych osobliwościach czasowników: gr. *oīda*, lat. *vīdī*, gmc. *\*witan* (ze szczególnym naciskiem na ang. *wit*, *wot*, *wist*, *weet*, itp.) i OCS *vědě* (ze szczególnym naciskiem na pol. *wiedzieć*).

**Abstract:** The article presents a brief historical account of the spread of Latin in Europe against the socio-cultural background, including language contact. Latin left significant imprints on the cultural heritage of pre-, inter- and post-mediaeval world, but it was not the only language associated with prestige, religion and education in older times. The article sketches the similarities, mutual relationships and contacts between Latin, Greek, Germanic and Slavic (attested in documents, the lexis and the writing systems of the latter daughter languages). In a micro-perspective, the present contribution focuses on the morphological and semantic peculiarities of the cognate verbs: Gr. *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Gmc. *\*witan* (with special emphasis on Eng. *wit*, *wot*, *wist*, *weet*, etc.), and OCS *vědě* (with special emphasis on Pol. *wiedzieć*).

**Słowa kluczowe:** gr. *oīda*, lat. *vīdī*, gmc. *\*witan*, OCS *vědě*, ang. *wit*, pol. *wiedzieć*

**Keywords:** Gr. *oīda*, Lat. *vīdī*, Gmc. *\*witan*, OCS *vědě*, Eng. *wit*, Pol. *wiedzieć*