

A number of examples of botanical Latin illustrate the differences from classical usage stressed by Stearn (1973), but also difficulties with Latin syntax and style faced by botanists in recent decades. This presentation will relate how the author created an extensive body of new, official botanical descriptions in the Nineties, manifesting the living status of this relatively neglected branch of the classical heritage.

Living dinoflagellates are marine microorganisms which cause 'red tides'. But the fascinatingly beautiful and complex fossil shells or 'cysts' of these organisms are studied by paleontologists as stratigraphic indices. During the late twentieth century, burgeoning knowledge of cyst anatomy stimulated the elaboration of extensive new descriptive terminology. These terms were introduced in English, not Latin, albeit mostly based on Greek and Latin roots.

When a group of scientists under Canadian leadership elaborated the first unified taxonomy of both living and fossil dinoflagellates (R.A. Fensome et al. 1993), the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature obliged them to provide Latin descriptions for many new taxonomic groupings. These descriptions were written by the present author, who endeavoured to balance the need to conform to botanical usage against a legitimate concern for clear Latin syntax and style.

Texts like the following description of the dinoflagellate Subfamily Helgolandinioideae will be discussed with an explanation of the English description and how it was rendered in Latin.

Goniodomaceae characterum alterutrum vel utrumque habentes: vel seriebus minime duabus tabulas plures quam Goniodomineis solitum praebentibus, vel vitae cyclo cystam laevam cellulosam in statu fossili non conservatam efferenti, quae archaeopylam chasmicam habet.

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