

## English and Latin as alternative languages for validating the names of organisms covered by the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*: The final chapter?

Gideon F. Smith,<sup>1</sup> Estrela Figueiredo<sup>2</sup> & Gerry Moore<sup>3</sup>

1 *Office of the Chief Director: Biosystematics Research & Biodiversity Collections, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa / H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Plant Science, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002 South Africa / Centre for Functional Ecology, Departamento de Ciências da Vida, Universidade de Coimbra, 3001-455 Coimbra, Portugal*

2 *Department of Botany, P.O. Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 6031 South Africa / Centre for Functional Ecology, Departamento de Ciências da Vida, Universidade de Coimbra, 3001-455 Coimbra, Portugal*

3 *National Plant Data Team, East National Technology Support Center, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 2901 East Lee Street, Greensboro, North Carolina 27401, U.S.A.*

Author for correspondence: Gideon F. Smith, g.smith@sanbi.org.za

**Abstract** During the Nomenclature Section of the XVIII International Botanical Congress that took place in Melbourne, Australia, from 18 to 22 July 2011, it was decided to allow English to be used as an alternative language for producing validating descriptions and diagnoses of new taxa of organisms covered by the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, which is to be renamed the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*; on and after 1 January 2012 this can be done in English or Latin. Until then, names of new non-fossil taxa must continue to be provided with a Latin description or diagnosis in order to be validly published.

**Keywords** Botanical Latin; English; organisms covered by the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*; valid publication

At most of the Nomenclature Section meetings held over the past several decades, attempts were made to change the *Code (International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, which is to be renamed the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*) by either replacing Latin as the language in which a validating description and/or diagnosis is provided in the protologue, or by expanding the number of languages in which this can be done (see Figueiredo & al., 2010a for a review). Most recently, Figueiredo & al. (2010b) proposed, for consideration at the Nomenclature Section of the XVIII International Botanical Congress held in Melbourne, Australia, that the Latin requirement be done away with entirely. It was proposed that from 1 January 2013 for a new taxon (algae and all fossil taxa excepted) a description or diagnosis in any language should be allowed for valid publication, once other Articles have been complied with. This proposal was criticized as it was claimed that it would create the much-feared ‘Babylon effect’, but see Figueiredo & al. (2010c) for a counter argument. Following publication of this proposal, Williams & Brodie (2010) published a parallel proposal for the elimination of the Latin requirement for non-fossil algae. However, they suggested that this proposal be voted on only if the Figueiredo & al. (2010b) proposals were accepted.

In the mail ballot that preceded the Nomenclature Section, the proposal put forward by Figueiredo & al. (2010a, b) was defeated by 98 votes to 20 (see McNeill & al., 2011). As this represents more than 75% ‘No’ votes the proposal could only be discussed at the Nomenclature Section if reintroduced from

the floor with the support of four other members of the Section. The proposal by Williams & Brodie (2010) was also defeated with more than 75% ‘No’ votes (87 : 15) in the preliminary mail vote. No attempt was made to introduce either proposal at the Nomenclature Section meetings.

Arising from strong views expressed at nomenclature sessions held during the International Mycological Congress in Edinburgh in August 2010, culminating in a Congress resolution endorsing the acceptability of English as an alternative to Latin in the valid publication of fungal names (Norvell & al., 2010), Demoulin (2010) formally proposed that this be permitted for names of fungi on or after 1 January 2013. Demoulin’s series of proposals received positive votes in the preliminary mail vote and were also positively received by attendees of the Nomenclature Section, being accepted on a show of hands. A new proposal was then put forward from the floor by one of us (GFS), which suggested that, in order to be validly published, a name of a new taxon of any organism covered by the *Code*, published on or after 1 January 2013, must be accompanied by an English or Latin description or diagnosis. Following brief discussion, the matter was put to the vote, and a near-unanimous decision supported the proposal that the description or diagnosis can be provided in either English or Latin. Thereupon, it was proposed and accepted that the implementation date be 1 January 2012. The Latin requirement has been controversial since its inception and attempts to eliminate it have been made since 1950 (see online supplement of Figueiredo & al., 2010a). Twenty-five years after it was proposed that English be used as

an alternative for Latin (McNeill & al., 1986), a step was finally taken to eliminate the need for Latin diagnoses/descriptions.

Demoulin's set of proposals not only provided for the use of English as well as Latin but also made clear that, for names of fungi published between 1 January 1935 and the implementation date of the new rule, a Latin description or diagnosis is required for valid publication. The extension to all groups of organisms was agreed on the same basis, and although we do not know the precise wording that the Editorial Committee will determine for Art. 36, the effect of the article will be as follows:

36.1. In order to be validly published, a name of a new taxon (algae and all fossil taxa excepted) published on or after 1 January 1935 and until and including 31 December 2011, must be accompanied by a Latin description or diagnosis or by a reference to a previously and effectively published Latin description or diagnosis.

36.2. In order to be validly published, a name of a new taxon of non-fossil algae published on or after 1 January 1958 and until and including 31 December 2011 must be accompanied by a Latin description or diagnosis or by a reference to a previously and effectively published Latin description or diagnosis.

36.3. In order to be validly published, a name of a new taxon of fossil plants published on or after 1 January 1996, or of any other organism covered by the *Code* published on or after 1 January 2012, must be accompanied by a Latin or English description or diagnosis or by a reference to a previously and effectively published Latin or English description or diagnosis.

During discussions held by one of us (GFS) with delegates at the Nomenclature Section, it was repeatedly stated that future efforts should centre on getting entirely rid of Latin as a validating language. For the moment at least, many taxonomists will be pleased that the use of Latin is no longer mandatory

when describing organisms covered by the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*.

## ■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. John McNeill is thanked for kindly commenting on a draft of this paper and for clarifying the impact of the decision to allow English to be used as an alternative language for producing validating descriptions and diagnoses of new taxa of organisms covered by the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*.

## ■ LITERATURE CITED

- Demoulin, V. 2010. (185–190) Proposals to amend Articles 15, 36 and 45. *Taxon* 59: 1611–1612.
- Figueiredo, E., Moore, G. & Smith, G.F. 2010a. Latin diagnosis: Time to let go. *Taxon* 59: 617–620.
- Figueiredo, E., Moore, G. & Smith, G.F. 2010b. (115–116) Proposals to eliminate the Latin requirement for the valid publication of plant names. *Taxon* 59: 659–660.
- Figueiredo, E., Moore, G. & Smith, G.F. 2010c. Latin diagnosis: An unnecessary impediment—a response to Jørgensen. *Taxon* 59: 1565–1566.
- McNeill, J., Korf, R.P., Stirton, C.H., Traverse, A. & Wu, C.-S. 1986. (313–316) Proposals on the provision for the use of English, as an alternative to Latin, for the valid publication of the names of new taxa. *Taxon* 35: 880–883.
- McNeill, J., Turland, N.J., Monro, A.M. & Lepschi, B.J. 2011. XVIII International Botanical Congress: Preliminary mail vote and report of Congress action on nomenclature proposals. *Taxon* 60: 1507–1520.
- Norvell, L.L., Hawksworth, D., Petersen, R.H. & Redhead, S.R. 2010. Fungal nomenclature 1. The IMC9 Edinburgh nomenclature sessions. *Mycotaxon* 113: 503–514.
- Williams, D.M. & Brodie, J. 2010. (170) Proposal to eliminate the Latin requirement for the valid publication of names of non-fossil algae. *Taxon* 59: 1296.