

The impact of loanwords on the growth and transformation of the English language

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Abstract

Loan words are the words adopted from other languages. Because of perceived advantages in terms of power, prestige, or economic status, one language group will borrow more words from another, creating an imbalance in cultural exchange. This study sheds light on the complex patterns of linguistic borrowing, the multiple uses, and the gradual incorporation of borrowed words into the English language. The ability to modify loanwords is demonstrated by phonological development, which is seen in pronunciation changes and grammatical adaptations to English sounds, such as gender and the emergence of new systems. This study does so through historical and contemporary philological studies that emphasise how Latin, French, and Greek borrowings greatly expanded the vocabulary of English and influenced its grammar. The writings of leading linguists have emphasised the profound impact of loanwords on English syntax, grammar, and overall linguistic development. This study describes how English developed through intensive research as an integration of multiple linguistic assets, in which borrowed words were adopted to represent cultural nuances, intellectual assets, and historical interactions. Continued borrowing adds to the continuing growth and diversity of the English vocabulary, encouraging its versatility and multidimensional expression. English is a language of importance for global connectivity across various sectors.

Keywords: *Linguistic borrowing, Phonological development, Philological studies, Syntax and grammar, Cultural nuances & Global connectivity*

Introduction

Most of us have the notion or perception that English should be an international or global language. English has long become a de facto lingua franca in commerce, academia, science, computing, education, transport, politics, and the entertainment industry, respectively. The modern usage of a global language is called “lingua franca.” It means it is a neutral form of speech that unites people of various ethnic origins. However, in reality, English has been popularly known as the world’s lingua franca language of inter-communication, especially beyond borders. This is a language known worldwide due to the progress of science, technology, politics, culture, education, and economy and the evolution of civilization. Many of these words comprise the English language, which has a huge vocabulary and originated as borrowed or adapted from various other languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Russian, Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and many more.

Stevenson: English is, in fact, the world’s common language.

Rohde : No language has ever influenced global economics, politics, and culture as this one does.

Stevenson : The language must be widely spoken and easily accessible for the sake of global commerce, tourism, a healthy global economy, and its culture.

James Nicoll: English has chased other languages down alleyways to knock them out and look through their pockets in pursuit of new words.

Validation

Learners tend to have the most problems when trying to comprehend this language, which is considered to carry the most vocabulary in the whole English language. In English, words may not have any correlation between their spelling and meaning. However, these English alphabetical letters never faithfully represent all or any of the speech sounds used in the spoken English language. This paper aims at raising the awareness of students towards the English language on the structural basis of the language, where it comes from, how it is affected by other languages, and how it can be enriched through loan words.

“Experts say that more words in English denote the same thing as compared to any other language. For example, words like “large”, “huge”, “vast”, “massive,” or even “elegant” carry huge meanings.”

Background Study

English belongs to the West Germanic language group, which emanates from Anglo-Frisian dialects that were spoken by the ancient people living in the Netherlands and the northern coast of Germany. Three primary eras have typically been identified in the history of the English language: Old English (450–1100 AD), Middle English (1100–1500 AD), and modern English (since 1500 AD). For centuries, many foreign languages have affected the English language. In the first century B.C., Europe was conquered by the Roman Empire, and the majority of Europe’s populations were composed of Germanic tribes, though some components of both linguistic varieties—Indo-European and Germanic—were detectable in the Europeans' language.

Presently, educated English speakers make use of the same number of words as were included in the Old English dictionary, approximately thirty thousand words. Old English vocabulary comprises words that would normally have been shared among all, or nearly all, Indo-European language speakers. Such terminology involves words that imply family members or relationships, body parts, names of trees and animals, various things in nature, verbs denoting actions performed by people, adjectives describing key features, demonstrative and personal pronouns, as well as numbers. The common Germanic layer has life-related, activity-related, and also natural terms. English has received improvement and influence from other languages over time, especially Scandinavian, Latin, and French. Many of those words are in French.

Science, technology, medicine, art, etcetera were among the contexts and fields where the terms were used. Like other loanwords in the English language, over time certain alterations have taken place. Their spelling or pronunciation and any other form of meaning, semantic, structural, or even morphological, were changed. Then, after that, they were incorporated into normal English words, through which they lost their parentage and became mere English products.

A loanword usually occurs when there are no suitable terms in the target language and it results in one word from the particular variety of the source language. Borrowing, otherwise referred to

as loanwords, borrowing occurs when speakers include foreign language terms in their speech. Of course, these are the metaphorical “loans” and “borrowings”. Sometimes people also deliberately accept a new word taken from another language if they believe that no other word can represent their ideas as much as this one does. For example, “tsunami” became a popular Japanese word, especially after the earthquake calamity that left its mark on Indonesia in 2004. It best describes the Japanese usage of the word, which makes it quite suitable for disasters in nature. In Japan, tsunamis occur often.

Objectives of the study

- Examine the historical and current impact of loanwords from various languages—Latin, French, Greek, and others—on English.
- Emphasise the importance of loanwords in the linguistic variation, adaptation, and universalization of English.

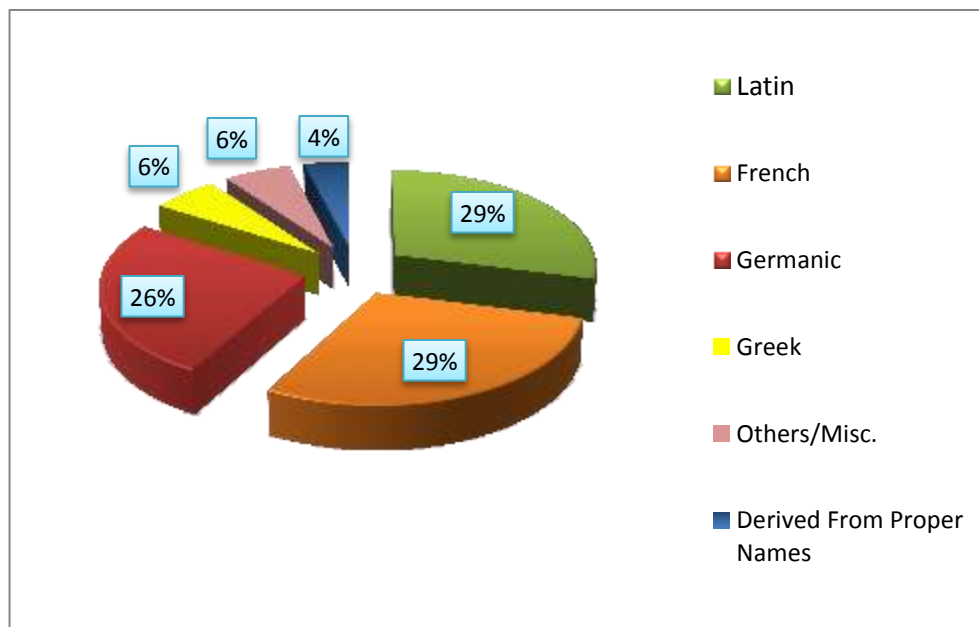
Borrowed terms from the English language

"The term 'borrowing' refers to the adoption of individual words or even large sets of vocabulary items from another language or dialect," states Hock (1986: 380). Despite the fact that borrowing means a situation whereby some of the words from both the lending and the borrowing languages may be lost, the term borrowing is still used even when no words are lost. "Copying" would be a more appropriate phrase, yet borrowing is well known over the years, and these loan words have also been coined borrowed terms."

In recent years as well as even during the last several decades, the English language has been borrowing words from other languages too. However, many of those terms taken up by English over time have Latin and/or French etymologies. One of the major dialects that have affected the English language is French. The origins of English words are distributed as shown in the figure below:

Fig 1:Arrangement of English word sources

[Source: Rao, V. C. S. (2018). The Significance of the Words Borrowed into English Language. Journal of Research in Spelling, Language, and Teaching, 2(6). ISSN: 2456-8104. Retrieved from <http://www.jrspelt.com>]



This pie chart shows the distribution of the origins of English words. Twenty-nine percent of English words come from French. While it is not exactly certain if most of the terms with Latin etymology come from the Latin language or through the French language, it is clear that 29% of these terms are Latin-derived. The following pie chart illustrates the rarity in general of Latin terms, which are mostly either scientific or legal terminologies. Also, 26% of the most popular English words came from German, so Germanic languages were predominant as opposed to Latin and French. Borrowed terms, which constitute approximately six percent, are of three types: Greek (6%), terms from other languages (6%), and the last four percent comprise proper names. Some of the terms included in their original language for comprehension are as follows:

Originating From Other Vocabularies:

A significant portion of the English vocabulary comes from French, Latin, German, Indian etc. Most words are pronounced according to English phonological standards. Some of those is depicted in the below mentioned figures.

Fig 2: "English words with French roots and vowels

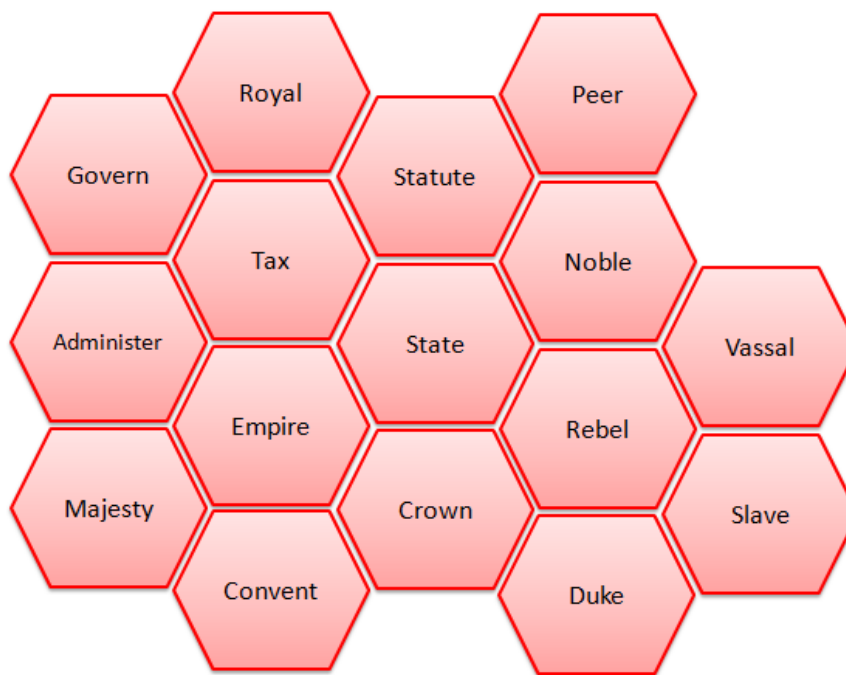
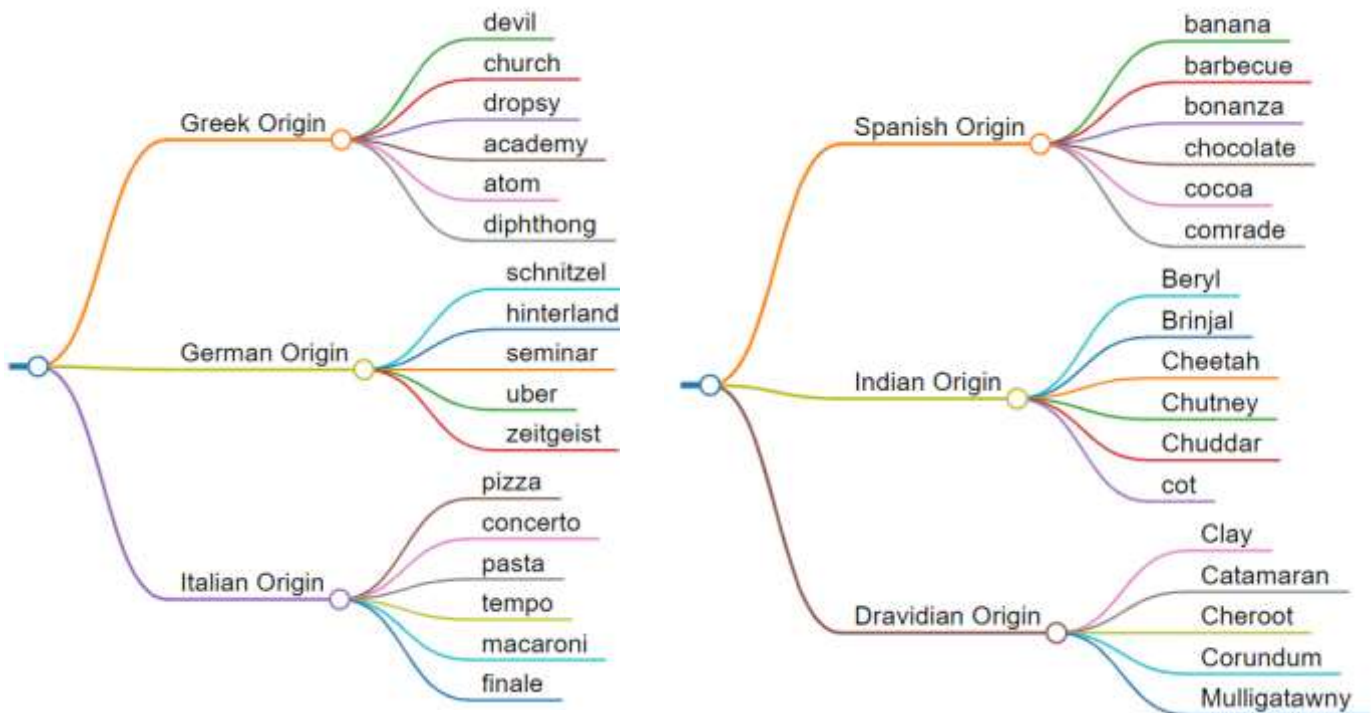
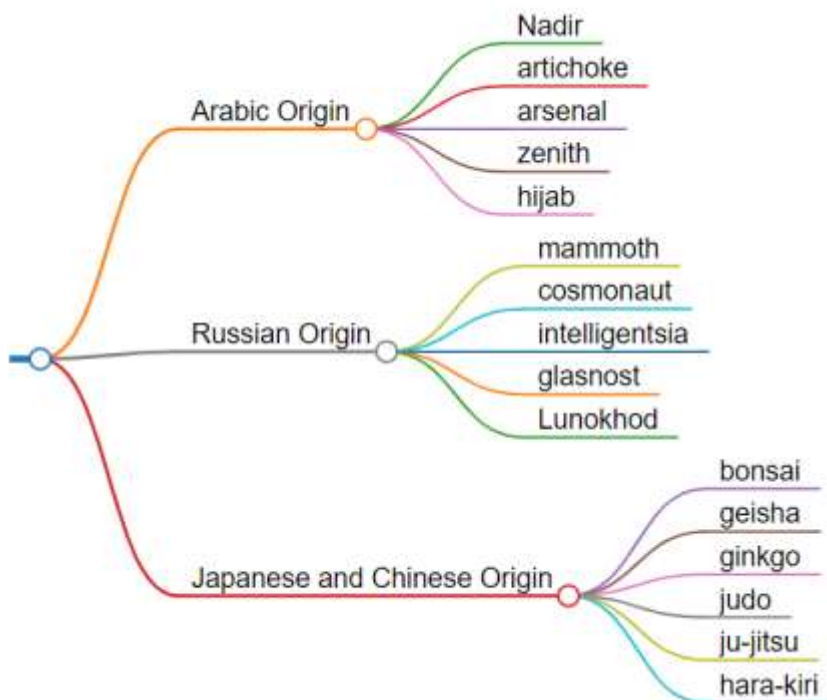


Fig 3: English Words with Latin origin



Fig 4: English Words from Various Origins





Borrowed Words

Loanwords are words that speakers of one language borrow from speakers of another (source language). Another name for the word debt, the phenomenon of speakers incorporating words from the source language into their own language is called abstract noun borrowing. Incidentally, "borrowing" and "credit" are metaphors because there is no real credit policy. There is no verbal message and no "return" of words to their original language. They simply speak a language other than their own and become part of a speaking community.

Borrowing is the result of cultural exchange between two language groups. Words can be borrowed from either of the two overlapping languages, but there is often an asymmetry, i.e., many words are transferred from one language to another. In this case, the borrowed language group finds the objects and ideas produced by the source language interesting and helpful because of their advantages in terms of power, status, and/or monetary issues. As a result of trade with the Romans and the acquisition of new commodities, the Germanic tribes acquired more Latin loanwords, and conversely, fewer Germanic words made their way into Latin.

The actual borrowing process is multifaceted and involves many use cases (i.e., the circumstances in which the borrowed word is used). Most speakers of the borrowed language usually know the source language as well, or at least enough to use the correct vocabulary. They are taken when speaking the borrowed language. When they speak two languages, they may, and often do, speak the same words as in the source language. The English, for example, borrowed the word garage from the French and originally pronounced it more like French than it is

commonly pronounced now. It is possible that the first Englishmen to use the word were at least somewhat fluent in French and heard the French use it.

When a new word is initially used, only the language source that is already known should be used. But eventually, even native speakers can use the new word. 'Exotic' would be how these speakers see this word. At this point, the word can be considered foreign because it is unfamiliar to most speakers and can be assumed to be from another language. The English language uses many foreign words and phrases, such as Schadenfreude (German), mutatis mutandis (Latin), and bon vivant (French).

Eventually, however, the new foreign word may become more common among speakers. With enough users, even those with little or no knowledge of the native language can understand and even use the new word. The newly created position is approved. Now we mean the word debt or debt. (Not all foreign words end up being loanwords; becoming obsolete before becoming common doesn't go that far.)

Foreign-borrowed words have had such a strong impact on the development and success of the English language. It is important to note that these borrowed terms reveal intelligence, culture, historical connections between other languages, and cultured languages, thus adding colour to the lexicon. The influence of borrowed words is manifested in areas such as phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, and so on in the English language. However, the most important effect of borrowing words is the expansion of the English lexis. The wide range of vocabulary that English has borrowed from a variety of languages has considerably improved its linguistic arsenal, resulting in an enriched resource of speech elements that enable even greater expression of thoughts within the limitations of a certain language. The borrowed words now bring new ideas, terms, and even cultural expressions, making the English language more flexible than before. A good example of lexical expansion through borrowing in English is the influence of Latin words. As an example, many words used in English originate from Latin, which is a dominant language in areas such as science, religion, and law. One English word that has the same meaning as a typical instance is "example," which is derived from the Latin word "exemplum."

"Example' comes from the Latin 'Exemplum' which means to show or illuminate."

The borrowed Latin has preserved the academic and intellectual heritage of Latin, along with building up English's vocabulary. One such key step in achieving this is the acquisition of vocabulary from the French language. The Normans conquered England in 1066, and French became an official language for the courts and government of the country. [For centuries afterwards, many words were introduced into the English vocabulary.] The borrowing of many French terms into English, especially in areas such as law, gastronomy, fashion, and art, is one example. One example is the French word "restaurant," which has become a widespread phrase in English.

"That is where we get the word 'restaurant' meaning a place where one feeds on customers."

The French borrowing in this instance offers such an example whereby English is shown to have appropriated a word from another language only to transform it for purposes consistent with its own linguistic as well as cultural framework. The borrowing of words and their incorporation into the English vocabulary is an area that has been widely studied in linguistics. Writers like Philip Durkin in "Borrowed Words: A History of Loanwords in English"¹ and Bill Bryson in "The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got Its Way"² analyse the influence of history and cultures on the enlargement of English vocabulary. English is considered an open-source language, which means it incorporates words and phrases across various source languages, in turn facilitating its expansion. New words, ideas, and cultural expressions such as Latin, French, etc. have been enhanced to make the English language more interesting. Therefore, this continuous borrowing process has given English a huge and diverse lexicon. Borrowed words have greatly influenced the growth of phonetics in English and pronunciation as well. When foreign terms are adopted in the English language, they usually get adapted to suit the phonetic characterization of the language. Such changes in the way that borrowed words and native English terms are pronounced can occur, affecting their pronunciation. This phonetic development can be exemplified by word borrowing from French during the Middle English period. French also contributed to modifying some sounds while introducing new ones in the pronunciation of the English language. For example, the English word "chivalry" changed its initial "ch" sound when it adopted the French term:

“The original “ch” sound was substituted by the English “sh” sound after importing the French term “chivalry” into English. Therefore, “shi-val-ry” was spelled as “shiv-al-ry.”

This phonetic alteration enabled the borrowed term to get closer to the English phonetic system. Word borrowing has also taken its toll on the pronunciation of words to some extent, as some were borrowed from Greek, Latin, or other European languages while others were from other native tongues. Phonetic conventions taken from the originating language may be used when pronouncing imported scientific and technical phrases. This, in turn, leads to different pronunciations compared to the native English words. For example, the Greek word "biology" keeps its original sound of the Greek letter "iota" (/aiə/) in the first syllable of the borrowed term:

“However, the word ‘biology’ is a loanword taken from Greek and still preserves the Greek pronunciation of the first syllable, which is pronounced ‘eye-uh’ (/aiə/) instead of adapting traditional English vowels’.”

The above picture shows how new phonetic traits may occur in English through loan words introduced into this language. A wide range of linguistic research explains how the adoption of foreign words led to the development of the phonetic system, including English sounds.” Richard M. Hogg, "The Cambridge History of the English Language" (p. 751), and John C. Wells, "Accents of English", p. 752. Foreign sounds adapted to fit within an English phonetic template or original pronunciations preserved in a borrowed phrase are examples of the dynamic nature of English pronunciation. Understanding the phonetic changes of a borrowed word can help a person in the linguistic and historical analysis of the English language.

Borrowing has been one of the most influential factors in shaping the syntactical and grammatical structures of English over the years. Foreign words do not only introduce new vocabulary but also affect structural elements like grammar and syntax in English. Notably, borrowing words also sets up new grammars. Foreign terms can introduce different verb constructions, word order patterns, and grammatical structures that are absent in native English. For instance, new grammatical components like gender agreement were created during the Middle English era when French terms were borrowed.

With the use of foreign words from the French language, gender agreement was included in all the nouns that were used during the Middle English era. An example can involve using the gender-neutral word “table” in English while its French equivalent “la table” shows female gender agreement.”

This borrowing enhanced the vocabularies of English as well as affected its language structure through gender agreement. Furthermore, a changed or new syntactic construct can be introduced in English by the loan word itself. For example, the use of nominal compounds in English was influenced by the Renaissance period's borrowing of Latin and Greek words. The Renaissance borrowed Latin and Greek words, giving rise to nominal compounds (“nominal compound”).

As a result of this mixture of borrowed words, English became more versatile and its vocabulary more complex. Many linguistic studies shed light on how borrowed words influence English syntax and syntactic structure. The effect of borrowing on the formation of grammatical structures has been examined in such works as "Natural Language Syntax: An Online Introduction to Trees" by Beatrice Santorini and Anthony Crouch and "Evolving Grammar: Language Acquisition and Diachronic Change" by Maria Teresa Guasti. It changed word order, added new grammatical features, and increased the grammatical choices available in English. Gaining knowledge about how borrowed words affect grammar can help us better understand how English has evolved over time. Research in the field of linguistics has generated several papers on the effects of borrowed words in English. Linguists studying the historical and cultural significance of loanwords and their impact on language development include David Crystal in "The Stories of English" and Robert McCrum in "The Story of English." 8 If we will summarise, assimilation of the foreign in the English language, vocabulary has been important in its growth and development. Words grow, phonology and pronunciation are formed, grammar and syntax are influenced, and cultural change is reflected in these words. Due to ongoing borrowing, English is becoming more diverse.

Conclusion

The constant flow of loanwords is a testament to the vigorous development of the English language, expanding it into the realm of linguistics. This comprehensive survey highlights the ways in which borrowed words—taken from many different languages—not only enhanced vocabulary but also had profound effects on phonology, grammar, and culture. also emphasise expressions in English. The study shows how many of the words are woven with borrowings from Greek, Latin, French, and other languages, with each borrowed word adding a distinctive tone to linguistic contrast. This form of borrowing produced more important changes than mere word mixing; it changed pronunciation, incorporated grammatical structures, and reflected

historical and cultural connections. The continuous assimilation of foreign words accounts for the flexibility and variety of English, making it a globally recognised language. Notably, it reflects the social changes in the borrowing process that reflect and enrich the language, which has simultaneously embraced many cultural nuances and intellectual properties. English, an ever-changing language, continues to absorb and change as a result of these linguistic changes. This study highlights the complex interplay between borrowed words and the transformative history of English. It emphasises how borrowed words have complex effects that extend beyond lexical richness and into the mainstream of language use, maintaining the vitality and relevance of English in a rapidly changing world in the 19th century.

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