

---

## The Significance of the Words Borrowed Into English Language

Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao ([csrv8@yahoo.co.in](mailto:csrv8@yahoo.co.in))

Professor in English, SITECH, Hyderabad, India

---

### Abstract

English is already established as the de facto lingua franca. A great number of words have been borrowed into English language. It has the largest amount of vocabulary that makes the learners confused to understand its semantics, structure, grammar and pronunciation. The loan-words were influenced and changed their semantic, structural or more or less morphological meaning, even their phonetic appearance. The main reason for borrowing is to provide a word from the source language variety when there is no suitable existing word in the target language. English language, still, continues to expand its vocabulary by means of loanwords from other languages.

**Keywords** - English Vocabulary, Loanwords or Borrowing Words, Origins of English Words

### Introduction

*English is truly the world language - Stevenson*

*English dominates international business, politics, and culture more than any other language in human history - Rohde*

*If trade and tourism around the world are going to operate and a global economy function and a global culture flourish, a widely shared, reasonably accessible language is requisite – Stevenson*

*'English has pursued other languages down alleyways to beat them unconscious and rifle their pockets for new vocabulary' –James Nicoll*

English is commonly considered the global language. In the fields of business, academics, science, computing, education, transportation, politics and entertainment, English is already established as the de facto lingua franca. A global language acts as a “lingua franca”, a common language that enables people from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities to communicate on a more or less equitable basis.

As a matter of fact, English language has been established and expanded as a global language for international communication. It is a language that is recognized and understood by people everywhere in the world, with the development of the society and the progress of science and technology, politics, culture, education, economics. There are a great number of words in English

language and most of the words have been taken or borrowed from other languages such as Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Russian, so on.

### **Rationale**

*Experts say that English has more words that explain the same thing that any other language. For example, the words, large, huge, vast, massive, and enormous, all mean something really big.*

English language has the largest amount of vocabulary that makes the learners confused to understand its semantics, structure, grammar and pronunciation. There is no correlation between the spelling and pronunciation (speech-sound) of the words in English language. The letters of English alphabet used are always inadequate to represent the speech-sounds of the English.

The intention of writing this paper is to make the learners aware of English language- its structure, position in the world, relation to other languages and how it is being enriched with loanwords or borrowing words from other languages.

### **The Background Study**

English, West Germanic language belongs to the Indo-European language family, originating from the Anglo-Frisian dialects spoken by people formerly living in the area of northwest Germany and the Northern Netherlands. The history of the English language has traditionally been divided into three main periods: Old English (450-1100 AD), Middle English (1100-circa 1500 AD) and Modern English (since 1500). Over the centuries, the English language has been influenced by a number of other languages. In the First century B.C. Europe was occupied by the Roman Empire. Most of the inhabitants of the Europe are Germanic tribes whose languages contain only Indo-European and Germanic elements.

The size of the Old English vocabulary is about thirty thousand words, corresponding to the number of words used by present modern educated speakers. The Old English vocabulary is formed by words which are common to all or nearly all Indo-European languages: terms of kinship, parts of human body, names of natural phenomena and of plants and animals, verbs referring to the basic activities of man, adjectives denoting the most essential qualities, personal and demonstrative pronouns and numerals. The common Germanic layer contains words connected with nature and with human life and activities. In the course of time, English has been

influenced and enriched by many languages, mainly by Scandinavian languages, Latin, and French. The number of French loan-words is immense.

The words were borrowed in different periods and for different purposes, for science, medicine, art, technology, etc. In the course of time, loan-words have undergone several changes that were common for English language itself. The loan-words were influenced and changed their semantic, structural or more or less morphological meaning, even their phonetic appearance. Afterward, they were assimilated with the native English words looking as pure English ones losing their origin or etymology.

The main reason for borrowing is to provide a word from the source language variety when there is no suitable existing word in the target language. A loanword or a borrowing refers to the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. "Loan" and "borrowing" are of course metaphors. In times of need, speakers purposely adopt the new word from the borrowing language as it is thought that the word most exactly fits the idea they are trying to express. For example, the Japanese word, *tsunami*, came into light and more widespread - especially after the disaster that devastated Indonesia in 2004. It is most appropriate to the natural disaster as this word is used by the Japanese people. Tsunamis happen frequently in Japan.

The dictionary meaning of *Tsunami*: a huge sea wave caused by a great disturbance under an ocean, as a strong earthquake or volcanic eruption.

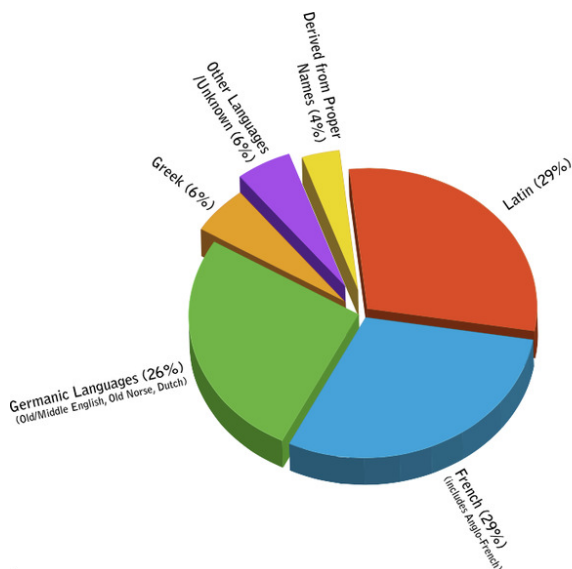
(<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tsunami>)

### **The Words Borrowed Into English Language**

*According to Hock (1986: 380), "the term, 'borrowing' refers to the adoption of individual words or even large sets of vocabulary items from another language or dialect." This process is called borrowing although the lending language does not lose its word, nor does the borrowing language return the word. A better term might be 'copying' but borrowing has long been established in this sense and words that are borrowed are called **loan words** (Trask, 1996).*

The practice of borrowing words into English has continued even in the last several decades from other tongues. In course of its history, the majority of words borrowed into English have French and Latin roots. English language has been influenced by a numerous tongues or dialects

of which French plays a major role. The below diagram shows the distribution of the origins of English words:



This pie chart shows the distribution of the origins of English words. 29 percent of the words in English come from French. 29% come from Latin, but it is unclear whether some of these words come directly from Latin or from Latin... through French. Both the Latin and French parts of this pie chart is that words that come from Latin are generally relatively rare (many of them are scientific or legal words). Similarly, 26% from German, the largest part of the very most common words in English (such as "the", "a", "do", "he"... ) come from Germanic languages, not from Latin or French. The 6% of the loanwords come from Greek, another 6% from other languages, and the remaining 4% words derived from Proper Names. The following are some of the words given with their origin for understanding:

**French Origin**

Major part of the English vocabulary is French origin. Most of the words are pronounced according to the rules of English phonology.

*Government and Administrative:*

govern	government	administer	crown	state	empire
royal	majesty	treaty	statute	parliament	tax

rebel	traitor	treason	exile	chancellor	treasurer
major	noble	peer	prince	princess	duke
squire	page	peasant	slave	servant	vassal

*Ecclesiastical:*

religion	theology	sermon	confession	clergy	clergy
cardinal	friar	crucifix	miter	censer	lectern
abbey	convent	creator	savior	virgin	faith
heresy	schism	solemn	divine	devout	preach
pray	adore	confess			

*Law:*

justice	equity	plaintiff	judge	attorney	petition
inquest	felon	evidence	sue	accuse	arrest
blame	libel	slander	felony	adultery	property
estate	heir	executor			

*Military, Army and Navy:*

armor	army	navy	peace	enemy	arms
battle	spy	combat	siege	ambush	soldier
guard	mail	buckler	banner	lance	besiege
defend	array				

*Clothing:*

habit	gown	robe	garment	attire	cape
coat	collar	petticoat	train	lace	embroidery
pleat	buckle	button	tassel	plume	satin
taffeta	fur	sable	blue	brown	vermilion
russet	tawny	jewel	ornament	broach	ivory
turquoise	topaz	garnet	ruby	pearl	diamond

*Food:*

feast	repast	collation	mess	appetite	tart
-------	--------	-----------	------	----------	------

sole	perch	sturgeon	sardine	venison	beef
veal	mutton	port	bacon	toast	cream
sugar	salad	raisin	jelly	spice	clove

*Social:*

baron	noble	dame	servant	messenger	feast
minstrel	juggler	largess	curtain	couch	lamp
wardrobe	screen	closet	leisure	dance	carol
lute	melody				

*Hunting:*

rein	curry	trot	stable	harness	mastiff
spaniel	stallion	pheasant	quail	heron	joust
tournament	pavilion				

*Art, Learning, Medicine:*

painting	sculpture	music	beauty	color	image
cathedral	palace	mansion	chamber	ceiling	porch
column	poet	prose	romance	paper	pen
story	rime	lay	volume	chapter	study
logic	geometry	grammar	noun	gender	physician
malady	pain	gout	plague	pulse	remedy
poison.					

*Common words and expressions:*

<i>Nouns:</i>	age	air	city	cheer	honor	joy
<i>Adjectives:</i>	chaste	coy	cruel	poor	nice	pure
<i>Verbs:</i>	advance	advise	carry	cry	desire	
<i>Phrases:</i>	draw near	make believe	hand to hand	by heart		
	without fail					

**Latin Origin**

allegory	index	magnify	mechanical	private	secular
zenith	conspiracy	contempt	gesture	immune	infinite,
minor	necessity	popular	precinct	private	script secular
solar	subjugate	temperature	testimony	vulgar	agendum
antenna	bonafide	real	genuine	erratum	innuendo
diurnal	tenebrous	laureate	mediation	oriental	proximity

**Greek Origin**

It is to understand that most of the Greek words were introduced into English by means of Latin at first and later through French.

athlete	catastrophe	criterion	theory	enthusiasm	orchestra
devil	church	dropsy	academy	atom	diphthong
ecstasy	harmony	nymph	theatre	phobia	micro
demos	bio	gigantic	gloss	logo	meter
phone	pseudo	therapy	thermal	toxic	zone

**German Origin**

English and German descend from the same ancestor language—West Germanic. So, English words are essentially similar to their German lexical counterparts, either in spelling (Hand, Sand, Finger) or pronunciation.

kindergarten	iceberg	wunderkind	angst	diktat
doppelganger	flak	poltergeist	bauhaus	blitzkrieg
neanderthal	strudel	sauerkraut	leitmotif	Volkswagen
gesundheit	noodle	pretzel	gründerzeit	panzer
schnitzel	hinterland	seminar	uber	zeitgeist
katzenjammer	zugzwang	schadenfreude		

**Italian Origin**

pizza	concerto	pasta	tempo	macaroni	finale
piano	casino	balcony	scherzo	macchiato	vivace
solo	espresso	trombone	zucchini		

**Spanish Origin**

banana	barbecue	bonanza	chocolate	cocoa	comrade
guitar	mosquito	vanilla	siesta		

**Indian Origin**

*From Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu:*

Ambarella	Aryan	Avatar	Bandana	Basmati	Bahuvrihi
Beryl	Brinjal	Cheetah	Chutney	Chuddar	cot
datura	deodar	dharma	dhoti	Dacoit	Jungle
Pyjamas	Shampoo	Verandah	shawl	bangle	khaki
poori	punch	thug	typhoon	yaar	

*From Dravidian Languages (Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil & Telugu ):*

<i>Kannada:</i>	bamboo	dhole	hijra		
<i>Malayalam:</i>	Copra	Coir	Teak	Mango	Betal
	Areca	Catechu	Calico	Papadum	Jackfruit
<i>Tamil:</i>	Clay	Catamaran	Cheroot	Corundum	Mulligatawny
	Patchouli	Pandal	Culvert		
<i>Telugu:</i>	Bandicoot	Mongoose	pitta		

**Arabic Origin**

English loan words have been borrowed directly from Arabic or indirectly by passing from Arabic into other languages and later into English.

Nadir	artichoke	arsenal	zenith	hijab
doner	kebab	imam	bayildi	sheshbesh
gal	Hamas	Hezbollah	Taliban	Bedouin
emir	jakir	gazelle	giraffe	harem
hashish	lute	minaret	mosque	myrrh
salaam	sirocco	sultan	vizier	bazaar

**Russian Origin**

Compared to other source languages, very few of the loan words in English come from Russian. Most of them are used to refer to things and concepts specific to Russia, Russian culture, politics, and history.

mammoth	cosmonaut	intelligentsia	glasnost	Lunokhod
Mir	Lunik	Politburo	sputnik	icon
muzhik	samovar	Troika		

**Japanese and Chinese Origin**



---

bonsai	geisha	ginkgo	judo	ju-jitsu	hara-kiri
kamikaze	karaoke	karate	kimono	origami	sushi
tsunami	tycoon	wasabi			
chow mein	kowtow	mahjong	oolong	shanghai	shantung

## Conclusion

Considering its status and importance, it is to understand that English is the language of primary source for the development of the society and the progress of science and technology, politics, culture, education, economics. A great number of words have been borrowed into English language and most of the words are from other languages such as Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Russian, so on.

English language, still, continues to expand its vocabulary by means of loanwords from other languages. Nowadays borrowings are mainly from the spread of mass media, trade, and immigration.

## References

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26014925>

<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/english/english-words-from-other-languages/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists\\_of\\_English\\_words\\_by\\_country\\_or\\_language\\_of\\_origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_English_words_by_country_or_language_of_origin)

<http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/word-lists/list-of-english-words-of-foreign-origin.html>

<http://www.danshort.com/ie/timeline.htm>

<http://www.studyenglishtoday.net/english-language-history.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lists\\_of\\_English\\_words\\_of\\_foreign\\_origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lists_of_English_words_of_foreign_origin)

<https://triangulations.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/the-history-of-the-english-language-a-diagram/>

<http://www.thehistoryofenglish.com/>

<https://www.quora.com/How-much-English-is-borrowed-derived-from-French>

Magami Aygun, Concepts of Borrowings in Modern Science of Linguistics, Reasons of Borrowed Words and Some of Their Theoretical Problems in General Linguistics, International Journal of English Linguistics; Vol. 5, No. 6; 2015

ZHOU Li-na, Loan Words in Modern English and Their Features, Sino-US English Teaching, March 2016, Vol. 13, No. 3, 209-212