

## Foreign words used in English

### Topic

What other languages have contributed to the English language

### Aims

- Develop reading skills through reading a text about the origins of the English language.
- Raise awareness of the origins of the English language and understand that it is in many ways a shared history with other languages.
- Help students understand a little more why spelling and pronunciation rules in English can feel very arbitrary.
- Help students learn to spell some commonly misspelled words accurately.

### Age / level

Older teens or adults B2 upwards.

### Time

60 minutes

### Materials

1. Worksheet 1 (3 pages)

### Introduction

The lesson begins with a short quiz about the English language, which makes sure that the students understand what a hybrid language English is, and the concept of loan words. They then look at some common loan words and try to decide which language they originally came from, before reading a short text to check their ideas.

The point is made in the text that English spelling (and pronunciation) seems very irregular because so many words come from different languages. The students then look at some commonly misspelt words and learn to spell them correctly.

**Procedure**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Lead in<br/>(10-15<br/>minutes)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise 1. Tell students that you are going to start with a quiz and put them into pairs to try and answer the quiz questions. It is fine for them to guess if they are not sure of the answers.</li> <li>Exercise 2. After the students have had some time to discuss, go through the answers, and elicit their responses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Answer key:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: The Anglo-Saxons originally came to Britain from West Germany, The Netherlands and West Denmark between the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 7<sup>th</sup> Century.</li> <li>B: It is estimated to be more than a million words, though this is of course changing all the time. This large number does include a lot of words which are almost never used, however. There are about 170,000 words in common use (answer A) and most native speakers have a vocabulary of between 20,000 and 30,000 words.</li> <li>C: Over 60% of English words have Greek or Latin roots</li> <li>B: (although most words come from Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Italian and German)</li> </ol> |
| <b>Speaking<br/>(5-10<br/>minutes)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise 3. In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss the two questions. Feedback as a class and write any examples on the board.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Vocabulary<br/>(10 minutes)</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise 4. In pairs, ask students to try and guess the original language of the loan words in the box. Help students with any unknown vocabulary or let them use dictionaries.</li> </ul> <p>Don't give them the answers at this stage, as they are in the text they are about to read.</p>   |
| <b>Reading<br/>(10 -15<br/>minutes)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students to read the text and check their answers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Answer key</b></p> <p>Arabic: admiral, candy, caravan</p> <p>French: café, entrepreneur, beef</p> <p>German: rucksack, delicatessen</p> <p>Hindi and Urdu: pyjamas, bungalow, khaki, shampoo</p> <p>Italian: broccoli, graffiti</p> <p>Japanese: anime, tsunami, rickshaw</p> <p>Spanish: cockroach, guerrilla</p> <p>Yiddish: glitch, bagel</p>   |

- Then ask the students to read the article again and answer the questions. Feedback as a class.

**Answer key**

1. That English has taken a lot of words from other languages and made them its own (not just borrowing them).
2. That many French words came into the language as a result of the Normal Conquest- when French became the official language of the country.
3. Because many English people spent a lot of time in India when it was a colony of Britain.
4. That the rules often follow the systems of other languages, rather than the original English language.

**Spelling  
focus  
(20 minutes)**

- Exercise 7. Ask students to discuss together any spelling rules they know. For example, 'i' before 'e' except after 'c'. You could point out that when this doesn't 'work' it is often because it is a loanword, such as beige, caffeine (both from French).
- Exercise 8. Ask students to try and correct any spelling mistakes in the list of commonly misspelt words.
- Check the answers as a class.

**Answer key**

1. embarrass
2. occasion
3. accommodation
4. acquiesce
5. recommend
6. responsible (Latin based words tend to end -ible, not -able)
7. necessary
8. pronunciation
9. professional
10. immediately
11. foreign (French, so I before e doesn't apply)
12. accessible (Latin based words tend to end -ible, not -able)
13. aficionado (Italian)
14. anniversary (Latin based words tend to end -ary, not ery)
15. ingenious

- Ask students to test themselves on any they got wrong until they are confident that they know them.
- If time, ask students to look back through their work and find any other words they often misspell, and write them out correctly.

**Contributed by**

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