

## Language Investigation Lesson

**Unit:** History of English Language

**Course:** English IV

**Learning Goal:** Students will analyze and understand how the linguistic influences of the past impact our language today.

**Students Objectives:** The students will be able to

- complete a linguistic analysis of a passage from contemporary journalism,
- quantitatively represent the origins of the passage's words in a spreadsheet,
- use quantitative data of origins to create an appropriate graph for comparison,
- compare and contrast the linguistic influences across genres of writing, and
- compare and contrast the multiple genres of journalism to draw conclusions about the genres.

**TEKS:**

- 110.34.b.1.A: TLW determine the meaning of technical academic English words in multiple content areas derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes.
- 110.34.b.1.D: TLW analyze and explain how the English language has developed and been influenced by other languages.
- 110.34.b.1.E: TLW use general and specialized dictionaries, thesauri, histories of language, books of quotations, and other related references as needed.
- 110.34.b.2: TLW analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence to support their understanding.
- 110.34.b.9.D: TLW synthesize ideas and make logical connections among multiple texts representing similar or different genres...and support those findings with textual evidence.
- 111.32.b.1.D: TLW represent relationships among quantities using concrete models, tables, graphs, diagrams, verbal descriptions, equations, and inequalities.
- 111.32.b.1.E: TLW interpret and make decisions, predictions, and critical judgments from functional relationships.

**Materials/Technology Needed:** Laptops, Internet access to reputable news sites, MS Excel, online dictionaries and histories of language.

**Background:** At this point in the unit, students have completed a subject sampler and WebQuest over the different time periods of English language development. They are blossoming scholars of the English language. Additionally, students have taken notes over a few key points from the thousand year history of the language and its major linguistic influences. Now students will explore how that history influences our present and future language.

## Instructional Procedures

**Prep Work:** Before class begins, the teacher will create a list of the most common words of the English language. Sample lists can be found on this [wikipedia page](#). For this lesson, it would be best to use a list of nouns or adjectives, longer words with certain differences of origin. This list could be created through a shared document with the class, a shared link to the website, or a written list at the front of the class. Students should also have available dictionaries or etymology references.

**Beginning Question:** Have students spend a few minutes thinking and writing a prediction to answer this question. They can consult their notes and draw on their knowledge from their previous discovery activities. Then discuss as a class.

Which linguistic influence do you think has the biggest impact on our language today--Latin, Greek, German, French, or Spanish? Why did you pick this language?

### **Opening Activity:** Origins of Our Most Commonly Used Words

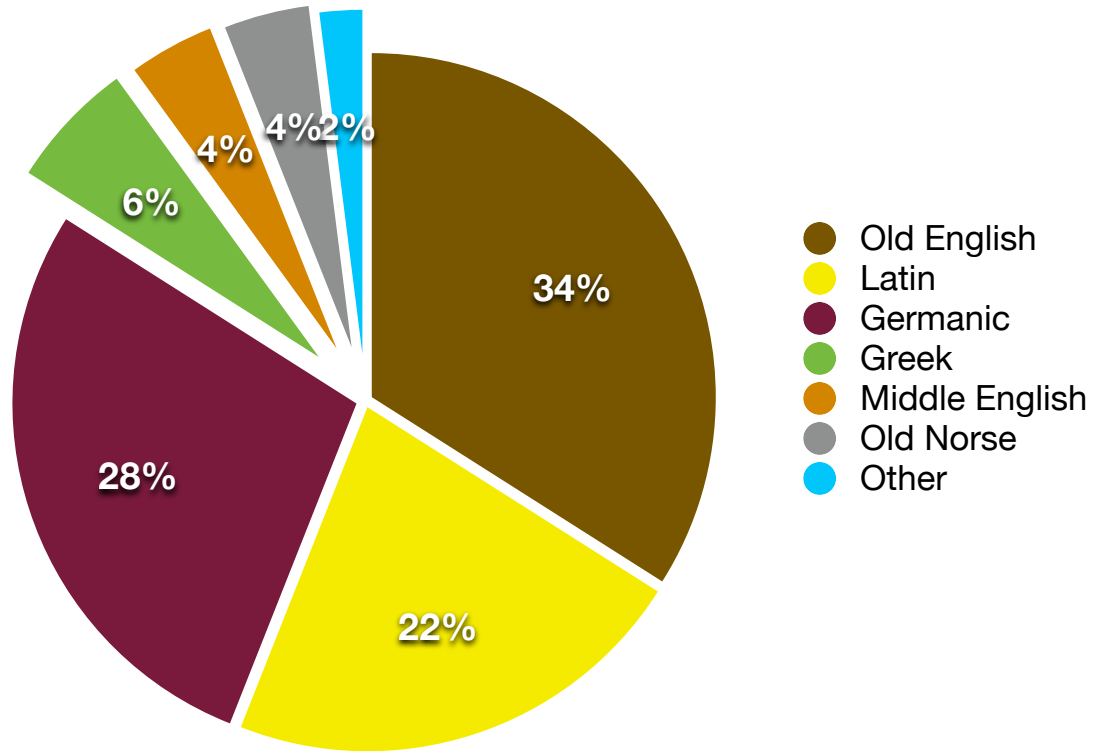
- Using the first few words on the prep list, show students how to find the origin of a word using an online dictionary. If necessary, explain what the language abbreviations represent.
- Divide students into groups of four and assign a group of words from the prep list.
- Groups should find the origin of their words. Groups will share with class and the teacher will record origins on the list, next to the words.
- After the set is complete, the teacher will demonstrate how to tally and record these origins numerically on a spreadsheet.
- The teacher will then make a pie graph to represent the origin data.
- Discuss as a class what these findings may mean for our language. Does anyone want to change their prediction from the beginning of class? Who was surprised? How would you justify these findings? What conclusions could we draw from these findings?

### **Group Activity:** Meta Analysis of Linguistic Influences

- Students will work in groups of four for this activity.
- Each group will find a news, sports, entertainment, and science article from reputable and appropriate online sources. One member per genre of writing.
- Each student will analyze the first 50 words of their article, **omitting proper names and articles**.
- Groups will follow the same pattern that teacher modeled in opening activity. Find the origins from these words and record in a spreadsheet. Then create a **separate** graph for each article.
- Student groups will collectively use their data and graphs to compare and contrast the use of linguistic origins and the genres of journalism. They should revisit their predictions and draw conclusions from their findings.
- These findings will be shared with the class in a presentation. Each graph on a slide with their conclusions at the end.
- All sources should be correctly cited following MLA guidelines at the bottom of each slide.

### Teacher Example

## What language influences are found in a modern news article?



Baker, Peter. "Syria Crisis and Putin's Return Chill U.S. Ties with Russia." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 13 June 2012. Web. 13 June 2012.