

Speaking English

1 Borrowed words: Where do they come from?

A language “borrows” a word when it doesn’t have a word of its own for a particular new idea. Most English words have actually been imported from other languages. Often in its history, people invaded Britain (for example the Romans, the Vikings and the Normans) – or Britons invaded other countries (like America and India). When the English came back home, many words arrived with them. Imports from Greek, Latin, Norse, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Dutch are numerous.



a) Look at the grid below and fill in the first two columns:

- Where do you think did the word come from?
- What do you think it means?



b) Then go online and check your guesses with the help of the internet. Fill in the last two columns, if necessary.

Word	Your guess		Result of internet research	
	Word comes from ...	Word means ...	Word comes from ...	Word means ...
anorak				
barbecue				
bistro				
bungalow				
ketchup				
lawn				
marmalade				
moped				
robot				
shampoo				
tattoo				
tomato				

c) There are also a number of words that come from German. How many can you find? Do you know them all?

2 Reading: French say “non” to the term *hashtag*

a) Find out what a “hashtag” is and how it is used in the microblogging system twitter.



b) Read the following text and use an online dictionary (e.g. <https://onlook.com/>) to look up words and expressions you do not understand.

The French Government has banned the Twitter term “hashtag” from all official documents. They don’t want English words used in their language. According to the Government’s powerful Académie française the French word “mot-dièse” must be used when the “#” symbol appears in print. Teachers should make sure schoolchildren use the term, and the media has also been asked to avoid using the English word.



This idea is the latest in a flood of orders from the Académie, the state organisation which protects the French language. The French culture ministry recently published a list of English words which should be banned from French. These included “e-mail”, “blog”, “supermodel”, “take-away”, “chewing gum”, “parking”, “weekend” and “low-cost airline”. Even such obscure terms as “shadow-boxing”, “detachable motor caravan” and “multifunctional industrial building” were blacklisted over 65 pages of forbidden vocabulary on the ministry’s website. And television sports commentators are asked to stop using the word “coach” or “corner” for football matches. They should instead say “entraîneur” and “coup de pied de coin”.

The French Government published a report on the use of English two years ago. It warned that the global domination of Anglo-Saxon culture had caused a “deep crisis” for the future of the French language. The report said, “English-speakers have a vision of the so-called English-speaking world, but an such a concept does not seem to exist in France. Despite having 200 million speakers of French on earth, nobody speaks of a French-speaking world. France is failing to fight for its own language, and there seems to be very little interest in doing so.”

c) Connect the following sentence halves to find out what people think about this topic.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| 1. They may ban them, but it won’t stop people using them as ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | A you can’t stop that with laws. |
| 2. Since everyone accepts that English is the international language for everybody ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | B and they would be wise to recognise that. |
| 3. Funny, because most English words ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | C are going to stay. |
| 4. As far as I know, no other country has a government department ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | D according to many French people speaking English is “cool”. |
| 5. Let your language live, breathe and develop spontaneously and naturally ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | E it is taught as a second language in every other country. |
| 6. Languages evolve and develop – ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | F and maybe it will have a future. |
| 7. Words that sound cuter in English, like “buzz” or “blog”, ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | G actually come from French! |
| 8. L’Académie is powerless to stop linguistic change ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | H solely to “defend” the nation’s language. |

d) What is your opinion? Write three sentences about what you think of the French idea to protect their language from English influence. Would you want to protect your language as well?



e) For a full list of English words the French want banned, visit the following website:

<https://www.culture.fr/franceterme> (click on “rechercher”)



Key

1 Borrowed words: Where do they come from?

Word	Result of internet research	
	Word comes from ...	Word means ...
anorak	Greenland (Inuit)	waterproof hooded jacket
barbeque	Native Caribbean	device for cooking meat over a fire
bistro	Russian	a café, a snack bar
bungalow	India (Bengali)	small house
ketchup	China (Amoy)	spicy sauce
lawn	Ancient France (Gaulish)	area of grass
marmalade	Portuguese	spread made with sugar and oranges
moped	Swedish	small motorised vehicle
robot	Czech	intelligent machine
shampoo	India (Hindi)	hair-cleaning detergent
tattoo	Tahiti (Tahitian)	skin coloured with ink
tomato	South America (Aztec Nahuatl)	sweet red vegetable

2 Reading: French say “non” to the term *hashtag*

1. D, 2. E, 3. G, 4. H, 5. F, 6. A, 7. C, 8. B