

In Search of the Word

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Academic Setting

I am a Title 1 Reading Instructor with the Albuquerque Public Schools system. Title I is a federally-funded literacy program aimed at improving the literacy skills of children whose reading levels are two grade-levels or more below their grade placement. As such, lessons need to be geared for low-level, high-interest activities, so as to address the needs and interests of the students involved.

I teach at Los Padillas Elementary School, which is located at 2525 Los Padillas SW, in the community of Los Padillas. Los Padillas is a well-established community in the southern-most part of Albuquerque's South Valley. This rural school is part of the Rio Grande High School Cluster. It offers full-day bilingual kindergarten and bilingual dual language programs in grades 1st-5th. The current enrollment for the school year 2002-2003 is approximately 400. Los Padillas is a relatively traditional and stable community. Some families have lived in this community for more than three centuries. Our school population is more than eighty-nine percent Latino.

Parents choose for their children to attend Los Padillas Elementary School because of its many programs focusing on reading and math in both English and Spanish. A large percent of the student body is non-English speaking. Many of the children at Los Padillas speak Spanish in their homes and English at school. Los Padillas has comprehensive school-wide bilingual and Title I programs. The school offers many before-school and after-school programs, as well as summer programs, which focus on the improvement of literacy skills and the cultural arts. Los Padillas provides many programs for language development to help our students improve on their language skills.

The purpose of this unit is to learn about the history of English and to study words and their origins and derivations. A unit to teach vocabulary will lead to a better understanding of English and help in improving writing skills. This curriculum is designed for a Language Arts and/or Social Studies unit for fourth- or fifth-graders. The purpose of this unit is to explore the beginnings of the English Language. The inclusion model at Los Padillas utilizes varying degrees of student learning capabilities at all grade levels. Inclusion is an instructional model whereby regular education and special education students work together in classrooms.

Since my position is primarily as a teacher of language, one of the highest on my list of priorities is constantly to look for meaningful learning experiences that may help to build literacy for my students. It was, and is, my hope that in this investigation and study of the history of the English language, my students—many of whom are in the process of learning English as a second language—will develop an enhanced feel and appreciation for language as an integral component of the human experience. Maybe, even, some of

them will identify—as speakers of a language not indigenous to the place in which they live—with those people of ancient times, who landed on those misty islands which we now call Great Britain—Romans, Christian missionaries, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians, later the Vikings, and later still the Normans—all of them foreigners, not speaking the language, but all of them influencing it, changing it to what we today call English.

Content and Background

“When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, ‘it means what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

-Lewis Carroll

Humpty Dumpty is, of course, mistaken. Language never means exactly what we want it to mean, “neither more nor less.” That is why writers spend a lifetime trying to “get things just right.” Harry, the writer-protagonist of Henry King’s movie version of Hemingway’s short story “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” remarks, “...I’ve always thought that if you could get it just right, just exactly right, all you’d need would be one word.” (King).

It is this which has inspired storytellers—whether in the oral tradition of the ancient various Germanic tribes, Scandinavians, Celts and Greeks, the present-day Masai of eastern Africa or Yaquis of central Mexico, or in the written tradition of Western Europe—since time immemorial: the quest to find that word.

What makes the process and journey all the harder is the fact that language is constantly changing, constantly evolving, in terms of its syntactic, phonological and semantic systems. This fact alone is the one constant among all the languages of the world: that whichever language you speak, it is bound to change. So the quest for that “word” becomes tangled up in the stewing, brewing flux of what makes language. It is like trying to pick a bubble out of foam while in the midst of a rolling surf. Or, as Abraham Lincoln put it, referring to the pair of issues which so dominated and preoccupied American political thinking in the years leading up to the American Civil War (the preservation of the Union and slavery) “It is like trying to thread a needle while holding a pig” (Lincoln).

What makes things even harder for the storyteller who has the fortune to have English as his Mother Tongue is the English proclivity for borrowing from other languages with which it comes into contact. It is this talent for borrowing—termed “hybridism” in its advanced stages by Jespersen (i.e., the practice of forming new words from the stem of one language and a prefix, infix, or suffix from another)—this facility and boldness in forming new words and turns of expression, this combining of forms of English with forms of other languages—which defines the “genius of the language” (Jespersen 97-98, 100-101).

One would think, looking at a map, that the place to begin one's investigation into the origins of what we call the English language would be in the language that was originally spoken in the place we call England. That, however, is not the case. The language which was originally spoken in England was Celtic, parent to the various Celtic/Gaelic languages of today—spoken by the Celtic folk. Ironically enough, this was the one language which had the least influence on English. Other than lending the language a certain flamboyance of expression, a certain raucousness and wildness, Celtic had little influence on English, even though some of the language's most notable writers come out of that linguistic ferment: Dylan Thomas, George Bernard Shaw, William Synge, Sean O'Casey, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, and the unknown tellers of such compendia of myths as The Mabinogion, to name a few (Baugh 85).

Julius Caesar invaded the British Isles in 55 B.C., and the Roman legions stayed off and on until A.D. 410. But even though the Romans stayed for almost five centuries, other than the adoption of some place names, this first linguistic invasion of the Celtic homeland had little staying effect. Within a generation or so after the withdrawal of the Roman legions in A.D. 410, the Celts had reverted to their native Celtic tongue.

This language was related, in a primal sense, to English. To get to this primordial ooze from which both languages sprang, we need to go back farther than the Romans—back to about 3500 B.C. On the north shores of the Black Sea, McCrum postulates that a language, which was the progenitor of English and most languages of Europe, was spoken. This language is known by linguists as proto-Indo-European today. It is the progenitor of languages ranging geographically from Sanskrit in the east to Celtic in the west, from Scandinavian in the north to Bengali and Italian in the south (36).

Linguists think that there are about thirty such language families in the world (Yule 169), which are subdivided into language groups. One such group, which spun off from proto-Indo-European, was the Germanic group. It was from this group that what we now call English was born.

The beginnings of English can be traced to the arrival (within a half-century of the Roman legions' departure) of several Germanic tribes who spoke related low German dialects: the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians.

Within a century-and-a-half of their arrival, the common dialect, which had evolved between these tribes, was being referred to as "English" (McCrum 44). It was not to be that this "baby English" would be left alone for long. Over the next four and-a-half centuries, the language would be impacted and influenced by three linguistic groups: the Celts (whose influence has already been discussed), Latin (its later intrusions into the British Isles, but this one to have a significantly more profound effect), and Scandinavian (Baugh 83).

This language was what we now call Old English. It lasted from about A.D. 600 until A.D. 1100 or so. Old English—with its elaborate, German-derived case-system—bears little resemblance to Modern English, with its analytic preoccupation with word-

order and when one looks at the two languages side by side, one is struck more by the dissimilarities between them than the similarities. It could, in fact, be said that we might just as well call Latin “Old Spanish” or “Old French” if we are to call the language of those fifth-century marauding low Germans “Old English,” since the changes from Latin to Spanish are as profound as the changes from Old to Modern English (Smith, K. Aaron. *The Story of English*. University of New Mexico: Albuquerque Teaching Institute, Summer 2002).

The first major influence on Old English, then, would begin in 597. The first Christian missionaries arrived in Kent in the south of England, to spread the Christian faith (Baugh 94). According to Baugh, this was really the third stage of Latin influence on Old English, the first having been the influence which the Romans had had throughout the previous centuries in their dealings with the Angles and other Germanic tribes who would later colonize the British Isles. The second would have been the few Latin words which the Celts had assimilated (87).

This third stage of Latin influence on the English language, though, would far exceed in both breadth and scope that of the first and second. It would continue, according to Baugh, in varying degrees as the fortunes of the Catholic Church rose and fell for the next thousand years (222). This happened mostly in semantic areas related to religion, education and learning, as well as science and medicine (102). Some of these words were:

abbot, alms, altar, anthem, ark, Arian, candle, canon, chalice, cleric, cowl, deacon, disciple, epistle, litany, hymn, manna, martyr, mass, minster, noon, nun, offer, organ, pall, palm, pope, priest, provost, psalm, psalter, shrine, shrive, shrift, stole, sub-deacon, synod, relic, rule, temple, tunic, cap, sock, silk, purple, chest, matt, sack, beet, caul, lentil, millet, pear, radish, doe, oyster, lobster, mussel, cook, box, pine, aloes, balsam, fennel, lily, mallow, marshmallow, rue, myrrh, savory, school, master, Latin, grammatic, grammatical, verse, meter, gloss, notary, anchor, coulter, fan, fever, place, spelter, sponge, elephant, phoenix, mancus, calend, circle, legion, giant, consul, talent, Anti-christ, antiphoner, aspostle, lcantor, canticle, cell, cloister, collect, creed, chrism, dalmatic, demon, dirge, font, idol, nocturn, prime, prophet, sabbath, synagogue, troper, accent, brief, decline, history, paper, pumice, quatern, term, title, verbena, celandine, centaur, coriander, cucumber, herbiage, ginger, lovage, periwinkle, petersili (parsley), cedar, cypress, fig, laurel, magdala (almond), cancer, paralysis, scrofula, plaster, aspide (viper), camel, lamprey, scorpion, tiger (99 ff).

This direct influence does not account for all of the Latinate influence on English, since the French influence on English—which would come about later, during the Middle English period—would further Latinize English in an indirect way. This French influence will be discussed later, in the Middle English section of this paper.

The third influence came to the British Isles in 787 in the form of a people closely related by blood and language to the Angles, Saxons and other Germanic tribes who were by then calling themselves English: the Vikings. The Vikings came from the

Scandinavian Peninsula and Denmark, bent on plunder, and they came to the British Isles in several waves over a period of several centuries. In the beginning their contact was limited. It was, however, when they stayed and assimilated with the English that their influence on the language came to be felt. This continued into the eleventh century, for the duration of the Old English period (Baugh 107-109).

It should be noted that the Vikings' language was closely related to the Germanic dialects from which English sprang. It should, then, come as no surprise that its effects extended not only to matters of vocabulary—including not only nouns but all parts of speech—but to matters of syntax and grammar as well. It was an influence that stretched into the most intimate and familiar areas of everyday English life and the English language. Some of the nouns borrowed from these Scandinavian cousins were:

axle-tree, band, bank, birth, boon, booth, brink, bull, calf, crook, dirt, down, dregs, eggs fellow, freckle, gait, gap, girth, guess, hap, keel, kid, leg, link, loan, mire, race, reindeer, reef, rift, root, scab, scale, score, scrap, seat, sister, skill, skin, skirt, sky, slaughter, snare, stack, steak, swain, thrift, tidings, trust, want, window.

Some adjectives included:

awkward, flat, ill, loose, low, meek, muggy, old, rotten, rugged, scant, seemly, sly, tattered, tight, weak.

And verbs:

Bait, bask, batten, call, cast, clip, cow, crave, crawl, die, droop, egg, flit, gape, gasp, get, give, glitter, kindle, lift, lug, nag, ransack, raise, rake, rid, rive, scare, scout, scowl, screech, snub, sprint, take, thrive, thrust (Baugh 117 ff).

The Scandinavian influence on the English language lasted until the end of the Old English period, which McCrum places at around 1100 (62). The passing of Old English into Middle English had been brought about in large part by the Norman Conquest of 1066. To a lesser degree the simple evolutionary tendencies which had already begun before the Conquest (i.e., the loss of the case-system) “took place more rapidly because the Norman invasion removed from English those conservative influences that are always felt when a language is extensively used in books and is spoken by an influential educated class” (Baugh 189).

The period of Middle English was to last until 1500, and was initially marked by a period of about three centuries (from the Norman Conquest until the mid-late fourteenth century) during which literary English was submerged under a blanket of Norman French. Even spoken English was used only by the lower classes. Virtually all of the nobility and clergy spoke Norman French almost exclusively. By around 1200 this had changed (Baugh 58,62).

In the interim—though the written language had been at least partially muted—the spoken language had not remained stagnant. “The Middle English period was marked by momentous changes in the English language.” This was the period when the grammatical change in English alluded to earlier in this paper, from a synthetic, case-driven language to an analytic, word-order-driven one, took place (Baugh 189). It was also this period when the further Latin influence took place. This was mainly in the area of vocabulary, and was largely effected through the Latinate French language. French and Latin words crowded into the language *en masse*. The French language dominated words relating to government and administration:

empire, crown, state, realm, reign, royal, prerogative, authority, sovereign, majesty, scepter, tyrant, usurp, oppress, court, council, parliament, assembly, statute, treaty, alliance, record, repeal, adjourn, tax, subsidy, revenue, tally, exchequer, subject, alliance, rebel, traitor, treason, exile, public, liberty, office, chancellor, treasure, chamberlain, marshal, governor, councilor, minister, viscount, warden, castellan, mayor, constable, coroner, crier, noble, nobility, peer, prince, princess, duke, duchess, count, countess, marquis, baron, squire, page, courtier, retinue, sir, madam, mistress, manor, demesne, bailiff, vassal, homage, peasant, bondsman, slave, servant, catiff;

law ,e.g.:

justice, equity, judgment, crime, bar, assize, plea, suit, plaintiff, defendant, judge, advocate, attorney, bill, petition, complaint, inquest, summons, hue and cry, indictment, jury, juror, panel, felon, evidence, proof, bail, ransom, verdict, sentence, decree, decree, award, fine, forfeit, punishment, prison, gaol, pillory, sue, plead, accuse, indict, arraign, blame, depose, blame, arrest, seize, pledge, warrant, assail, assign, judge, condemn, convict, award, imprison, banish, acquit, pardon, felony, trespass, assault, arson, larceny, fraud, libel, slander, perjury, adultery, property, estate, tenement, chattles, appurtenances, encumbrance, bounds, dower, legacy, patrimony, heritage, heir, executor, entail, just, innocent, culpable;

the military:

army, navy, peace, enemy, arms, battle, combat, combat, skirmish, siege, defense, ambush, strategem, retreat, soldier, garrison, guard, spy, captain, lieutenant, sergeant, dart, lance, banner, mail, buckler, archer, chieftain, portcullis, moat, arm, array, harness, brandish, vanquish, besiege, defend, hauberk;

ecclesiastical affairs:

religion, theology, sermon, homily, sacrament, baptism, communion, confession, penance, prayer, lesson, passion, clergy, clerk, prelate, cardinal, legate, dean, chaplain, parson, pastor, vicar, sexton, abbess, novice, friar, hermit, creator, savior, trinity, virgin, saint, miracle, mystery, faith, heresy, schism, reverence, devotion, sacrilege, temptation, damnation, penitence, contrition, remission, absolution, redemption, salvation,

immortality, piety, sanctity, charity, mercy, purity, obedience, virtue, solemn, divine, reverend, devout, preach, pray, chant, repent, confess, adore, sacrifice, convert, anoint, ordain;

fashion, meals and social life:

fashion, dress, apparel, habit, gown, robe, garment, attire, cape, coat, cloak, frock, collar, veil, train, chemise, petticoat, lace, embroidery, pleat, buckle, button, tassel, plume, kerchief, mitten, garter, galoshes, boots, embellish, adorn, luxury, satin, fur, sable, beaver, ermine, brown, scarlet, russet, tawny, blue, jewel, ornament, brooch, ivory, enamel;

and art, learning and medicine: *art, painting, music, sculpture, music, beauty, color, figure, image, tone*, etc. (Baugh 202 ff) (Jespersen 79-84). It should be able to be inferred—through the types of words that the French brought into the English language—what some of the social implications of the French presence in England were: that is, that the French were the nobility, the leisure class, etc., while the English were the common folk, working class, etc. Latin came into the language mostly through the written word, in texts such as The Bible and The Lives of the Saints, so that we get words like *abject, adjacent, allegory, conspiracy, contempt, custody, distract*, etc, while English hung on within the confines of the home, with words relating to everyday life (e.g., *eat, drink, sleep, work, play*, etc.). (McCrum 58) As Baugh puts it, “The richness of English in synonyms is largely due to the happy mingling of Latin, French, and native elements. It has been said that we have a synonym at each level—popular, literary, and learned.” (e.g., *rise, mount, ascent—ask, question, interrogate—goodness, virtue, probity—fast, firm, secure*, etc.) (225).

Historical linguists place the end of the Middle English period and the beginning of the Early Modern English period at around 1500. This line of demarcation is marked by several changes in the language—three syntactic, four morphological, one lexical, and one phonological. It should probably be noted here that these changes had likely been going on for some time, but that for most of them 1500 marked the point at which one could say they were viable—and irreversible—aspects of the language as it existed at the time.

The syntactic changes—which had really been pretty well effected by the beginning of the fifteenth century but which by the beginning of the sixteenth could definitely be termed complete—were the death of the old complex inflectional system of Old English (although remnants are found in the Modern English pronoun system), the firm establishment of word-order to indicate noun roles (i.e., subject, object), and the rise in use of the verb “to do” as an auxiliary verb in the simple present and simple past tenses in negative and interrogative sentence types (Finnegan 531).

The morphological changes include: 1) the replacement of strong verb forms by weak verb inflections (Of three hundred thirty-three strong verbs in Old English, only sixty-eight remain strong in today's Modern English.); 2) the simplification of the definite

article into the invariable “the”; 3) the introduction and establishment of an indefinite article “a/an,” the form of which is phonetically conditioned; and 4) the loss of a dual pronoun case, as well as the loss of the distinction between second-person singular and second-person plural, and the distinction, as well, between a second-person familiar and a second-person formal (Finnegan 531-2).

The lexical change was more in the way people came to be using the language than in the particular forms in which it manifested itself. Essentially—and if one wished to put a date on it, the founding of Caxton’s printing press (and subsequent re-publication of England’s beloved Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales) in 1476 would do as well as any—English was coming into its own. No longer did all English scholars and academicians feel it incumbent on them to write and publish exclusively in Latin. The English vernacular was coming to begin to be the chosen form of expression for writers (Finnegan 533).

They had a tough row to hoe, given the vagaries and inconsistencies of English spelling. And their job was not about to get any easier. Indeed, The Great Vowel Shift goes a certain distance towards explaining the chaotic and sometimes maddening system—or, as some say, lack thereof—of English spelling. When William Caxton introduced his printing press in 1476, he established the modern spelling of English vowels just prior to a great phonological shift in their pronunciation. The Great Vowel Shift took two centuries (from 1450-1650) to play out completely, and during this time all long vowels of Middle English underwent a systematic shift. Each long front vowel raised into the position of the one already occupied next higher in the system, and the same thing occurred with the back vowels. The two highest vowels, having nowhere else to go, became diphthongs. Thus, for example, ah became e (as in “get”), e became ay, ay became ee, and ee became the diphthong I. On the other side, o (as in “bought”) became o (as in “tow”), o became u (as in “blue”), and u became “ow” (Finnegan 531).

All of these linguistic changes in the English language—syntactic, morphological, lexical, and phonological—mirrored changes in the landscape of English life as a whole, as that small island nation blinked its eyes and emerged during the latter part of the sixteenth century and first part of the seventeenth century into a period of unprecedented change of any European society. Elizabeth I became the Queen of England in 1558, and James I, her successor, died in 1625. During these consecutive reigns, the (arguably) greatest writer in the English language of all time—Shakespeare—wrote, and (again, arguably) the greatest single literary work in the English language of all time, *The King James Authorized Version of the the Bible*, was, by King James’ decree, published. During that short span of time—the lifespan of a single man, a single woman—England passed through three of the most significant historical evolutions of the past two millennia: the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the emergence of England as a world power (McCrum 73-75).

“The Elizabethan Age,” as that epoch has come to be called, was a time of great fervor, great expectations, great experimentation and confidence—in terms of politics, literature, art, the theater, and (more to the point of our present purposes) linguistics. It

was a time when the little island nation of England defeated the greatest maritime nation of the world at the time, Spain; a time when some of the greatest writing in the English language of all time was being produced.

It must certainly have been a heady time, indeed, to be an Englishman. And it was, certainly, this confidence, this exuberance, this headlong and reckless thrust and confluence of a language and history of a nation that set the stage for the same kind of openness to change, the willingness to take risks which has defined the language since. It was what has made English so malleable, so amenable to universality. Adverbs could (and can) be made into verbs. Nouns could (and can) become adjectives. Prepositions could (and can) be used to form nouns and verbs. (McCrum 78).

Shakespeare was the perfect man to take full advantage of such a timeless and precious gift—to be born into an era of such confidence, such excitement, such innovation—this man of “fire-new words,” to use his own phrase. But, even for all that, he was “...acutely—almost poignantly—conscious of the gap between words and meaning. As Grandpre says in Henry V, ‘Description cannot suit itself in words to demonstrate the life of such a battle.’” Could Shakespeare, himself, have wondered about the same question which was to haunt Lewis Carroll and Ernest Hemingway (McCrum 85, 87)?

Be that as it may, the Elizabethan Age came to an end. There was to follow, in England, a long and tortuous Civil War, which the English nation was to survive. But it would never be the same. The English language, too, was to survive—both the long English Civil War, and the even longer Augustan Age and post-Augustan Age—which would assault the language not with blunderbusses and psalters, as Cromwell and his Round Hats had assaulted the House of Stuart—but with ponderous volumes of prescriptive grammars and lexicons. The Age of Reason had dawned—and with it, the Reformation.

It should have come as no surprise, to any one who read about Isaac Newton, sitting up there in Oxford under the tree dodging apples, and his Third Law of Physics—the action/reaction principle. If the Elizabethan Age had been one of wild abandon, of unbridled and spontaneous creativity of expression across the boards, of sublime indifference to order and wanton disregard for regularity, it should only have been expected that something quite the opposite was to come in its wake.

And come it did. In this new age of scientific rationalism, with its strong sense of order and value of regulation, men such as Dryden and Jonathan Swift tried for a century-and-a-half to rein in the unruly and unpredictable language, with an eye to three ends: “1) to reduce the language to rule and set up a standard of correct usage; 2) to refine it—that is, to remove supposed defects and introduce certain improvements; and 3) to fix it permanently in the desired form” (Baugh 308).

They looked with longing across the English Channel at the l’Academie francaise in France and Accademia della Crusca in Italy, founded to protect the French and Italian

languages—by keeping them pure, suspending the processes of growth and decay which are the imprimatur of all living things, including languages. But though they tried for over a century to set up an English analog to these Continental academies, it was not to be England. Their efforts to fix the language in a pure and immutable form failed and by the end of the eighteenth century, we find gaining momentum for the notion that the single most important criterion for language is its usage. At the same time English was being set to a standard, another important development in the history of English was underway. The time had come for the great European powers, first, to realize that there were vast expanses of the world which had heretofore lain beyond their ken; second, claim these territories in the names of their respective nations; and, third, colonize them (Baugh 340-348).

England came late to the race among European powers for colonial possessions. The Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese had a century's head start on the upstart little island nation by the time England got around to serious colonization in the early seventeenth century with the founding of Jamestown and the Plymouth Bay colonies in North America.

England caught up—with a vengeance. She expelled the Dutch from their toehold in North America in New York in the late seventeenth century. Then, a century later, the French-Indian War left France (except for an unofficial presence in the Canadian province of Quebec, and an official one on a few islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence) out in the cold, and England (and with it the English language) in sole possession of North America (McCrum 107).

Within a quarter-century, England had won exclusive possession of Australia and New Zealand and had established a strong presence in southern and eastern Africa. Within another decade or two, England could claim India (which then included present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh), as well as major cities in China, such as Hong Kong and Singapore (McCrum 263).

Early in the nineteenth century, then, it was not hyperbole to state that “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” In the two centuries that have passed since then, the Empire has all but vanished. It still exists, a shadow of its former self, in the form of the British Commonwealth, which many former colonies have chosen to join. But certainly no one would dispute that England is less a political and military power now than it was two centuries ago.

The English language, though, is a different issue altogether. It can certainly be said that today the sun never sets on the English language. It has transformed itself in myriad ways—from the pidgins and Creoles which sprang up in the colonial days, many of them still spoken today (from the Caribbean Creole heard on the streets of Kingston and Port o' Spain to Tok Pisin, the national language of Papua New Guinea)—to the African-American English Vernacular dialect. Interestingly enough, it carries retentions of certain Old and Middle English forms, such as an inflected past tense, and the pronunciation of “ask” as “aks,” among others—due, probably, to the sociolinguistically

peripheral status of the speech communities in which they have been used (Poplack 1).

The English of today is, admittedly, not a single entity. (Is any language—any living one, anyway?) It is composed of two major dialects: British English (spoken in Great Britain and all the former British colonies except Canada and the U.S.A.), and American English (spoken in the U.S.A. and Canada). There are many “minor” dialects, as well.

Some of these dialects are mostly mutually intelligible today, so we still call them English. There will likely come a day when that is no longer the case. Through time, distance, and socio-ethnic-economic issues and attitudes, languages diverge into dialects, and these dialects continue to diverge until they become separate languages. It happened to Latin; it happened to Sanskrit; and it happened to what must certainly have been not a single language but rather a conglomerate of dialects, which we now call Proto-Indo-European. Only two hundred generations have lived and died since the time when our forebears walked on the shores of the Black Sea some six thousand years ago, uttering to each other comments about the weather, the fishing, the crops, whose daughter was to marry whose son. One can't help but wonder what the words must have sounded like. And what a wealth, what a treasure of linguistic diversity sprang from that conglomerate of dialects (Finnegan 372)!

Will English, like its forebear proto-Indo-European, give birth to myriad languages in the future? One can't but wonder if six thousand years in the future people might wonder what this “English” must have sounded like, as we walked along the shores of the Pacific or the Atlantic or Indian or Arctic Oceans, discussing the same kinds of things our ancestors discussed on the shores of the Black Sea six thousand years in the past. Will we have found that word which so intrigued Shakespeare and Carroll and Hemingway, the pursuit of which so delighted and mystified them? Or will writers six thousand years in the future still be searching for it?

As I hope to have established in the preceding pages, an individual language does not exist in a vacuum, any more than an individual person does. Nor is a language a static thing, any more than a person is. It does not appear apropos of nothing and with no reference to what came before, but is born (the offspring of other languages), grows, develops and evolves in its own distinctive and unique ways, defined in some ways by its progenitors but in others by its own inimitable fashion and genius.

Implementation

For our first assignment the students will research the history of English surnames. I propose to spend two weeks on this activity.

Lesson plans follow for our unit on the English language and its development. These activities are planned to develop students' writing skills through mini-lessons. The

lessons will include reading activities and discussions centered on the basic principles of the development of the English Language.

Assessment:

There are written activities that will be scored on a scale of 100 points each to total points for the four projects. Grading scale: (total points): 500-400= A; 399-300 = points B; 299-200 points = C; 199-100 points = D; 99 points and below = F.

The teacher will keep a daily chart of points earned for all activities and discussions. A single possible grade of 100 points will be given for each completed assignment. There will be 500 possible points for all activities in the Exploring the English Language unit.

This unit will seek to address content standards for the New Mexico State Content Standards for Social Studies and Language Arts. The following standards and benchmarks will be used in our lesson plans. They will be referred to as either LA or SS followed by the corresponding Roman number.

- I. *Language Arts Content Standard 1*: Students will understand and use Language Arts for communication.

Benchmark: Students will develop an awareness of and use a variety of language resources: and acquire, develop, and use vocabulary and linguistic skills to communicate effectively.

- I. *Social Studies Content Standard 1*: Students will use knowledge and cultural understanding to explain how the world's peoples cope with ever-changing conditions. They will examine issues from multiple perspectives, and respond to individual and cultural diversity.

Benchmark: Students will recognize that the world is made up of many people, and their histories have similarities and differences from the students own.

- II. *Social Studies Content Standard 3*: Students will know, understand and apply language, tools and skills of social studies.

Benchmark: Students will interpret and report social studies information from diverse sources (people, media, technology, computers, and libraries) and design and participate in civics projects in the school, community, and beyond.

- III. *Social Studies Content Standards 4*: Students will identify and understand varying perspectives in historical writing, and develop critical sensitivities, such as empathy regarding attitudes, values, and behaviors of people in a variety of historical contexts.

Benchmark: Students will identify and understand varying perspectives in historical writing, and develop critical sensitivities, such as empathy regarding attitudes, values, and behavior of people in historical contexts.

IV. *Social Studies Content Standards 11:* Students will know and understand the diverse, dynamic, and ever-changing nature of culture.

Bench mark: Students will demonstrate how languages, stories, folktales, media and other artistic creations and performances serve as expressions of culture and demonstrate an appreciation and respect for cultural diversity.

Lesson One (Introduction): *Word Survey*

The goal of this lesson is to introduce the students to the origins of some common English words and locate the words listed with the country of their origin. Students will need an atlas. Through class discussion students will match the countries with the words by adding clues. (Example: I would love to ski in Norway. Can you find Norway on the map?) Students will contribute their knowledge of understanding of the origin of some common words used in the English language. Students will try to match words with their origins by reviewing the example sentences used in class. Students will after discussion of pronunciation and meaning, practice matching the correct answer. Students will create flashcards, writing the word on one side and the origin on the other. Partner work can be used to practice before the quiz. The test is worth 100 points.

1. elf	1. Norwegian (Norway)
2. ski	2. Persian (Iraq)
3. magic	3. Japanese(Japan)
4. borsch	4. Chinese(China)
5. sugar	5. Scotland (Scotland)
6. weird	6. Sanskrit (India)
7. mosquito	7. Old English (United Kingdom)
8. judo	8. Russian (Russian)
9. genie	9. Spanish (Spain)
10. tea	10. Arabic (Saudi Arabia)

(Answers: elf-Old English, Ski-Norwegian, magic-Persian, borsch-Russian, sugar-Sanskrit, Weird-Scotland, Mosquito-Spanish, Judo-Japanese, Genie-Arabic, Tea-Chinese)

Standards used will be: SS-I, SS-II, and LA-I.

Lesson Two: *What was that name? Discovering the backgrounds of common names.*

In early history a first name was all that was needed for identification. As populations increased, second names were needed for further identification.

Fill in several of your choices that you are familiar with from your list of family, friends, or famous celebrities. The list will be graded on a participation grade of 100 points. Standards used will be SS-I, SS-II, and LA-I.

Names using a prefix or suffix: “son of John”- Johnson
Scottish -“Mc, Mac,” means-son of
List as many as you can find that may fit this category.

Names showing location or place: Rivers, Atwater, Hill, Washington,
List as many names as you can that fit this category.

Names showing occupations: Smith, Baker, Hunter, Taylor,

Names that refer to country of origin: Flemish, French, Holland,

Art Extension from Lesson Two: *Creating a Coat of Arms!*

Families that have heritages from Europe and Asia may have coats of arms. Using the students’ last names and extended family names, students will create their own coats of arms. The World Book Encyclopedia is an excellent source for symbols and patterns for your students to create their own coats of arms. A basic chevron shape will be our beginning pattern—the more colorful the better. Shields will be displayed on bulletin boards. This activity has possible 100 points for the shield and 100 points for the presentation. Display of the shields will create involvement with the students understanding of each student’s heritage. Standards used will be SS-I, SS-II, SS-III, and LA-I.

Lesson Three: *What is the World’s Longest Word?* <http://www.ezboard.com>

One web site for long words is: <http://www.ezboard.com>. Classroom laptop computers would be ideal for this activity. Each student will create a list of at least three of the longest words he or she can find.

For the next part of this activity, students will need a dictionary. They will go on a scavenger hunt to find ten of the longest words they can find in the dictionary. This is a

great team project that will help students work together while they are practicing dictionary skills. Students must write the complete definition of the word, give the origin of the word, and compose a sentence, using the word. This activity has possible 100 points. Standards used will be LA-I and SS-II.

Documentation

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Web Sites for Teachers:

History of the English Language; <http://www.wordorigins.org/histeng.htm>

Book List for students:

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Web Sites for students:
Longest word in the English Language
Sources of English Words

<http://www.ezboard.com>
<http://www.wordorigins.org>