

DISCOVERING WORDS ON MONDAYS APRIL 20th “FOREIGN WORDS IMPORTED INTO ENGLISH” THEME

The aim of this record is to help you to follow up any points of interest.

General use of foreign words/phrases

- meeting a need where no suitable English phrase is extant
- English's multiple heritage from other languages
- to impress as mark of education/status
- “**loanwords**” for new meanings e.g **barista, robot, sushi**.

Alma mater: literally "kind mother" indicating former school, university, etc.

Carte blanche: complete freedom. French phrase meaning "white card/paper", supposedly a sign of military surrender.

Gung-ho: enthusiastic, eager. Chinese phrase adopted by US forces in WW2.

Faux: French word for "false", fashionably used on internet upinstead of "false/fake" as if an English word.

Déjà vu: literally "already seen" (French), but used for odd psychological effect of impossible familiarity.

"Open Sesame": said, perhaps humorously, when unlocking something. Originates from French translation of "1001 Nights" (c.1700) where the phrase unlocks a treasure cave. Can mean unrestricted access e.g. "this course is an open sesame to well paid jobs". Not clear if from simile of opening up of sesame seed pod or a proper name. If the latter, original meaning could be "in the name of heaven".

Apostrophe: from French but ultimately Greek, "a turning away". Once apparently used of orators addressing individual audience members. Originated in Italian prose late 15th C, indicating omission or elision, Use in English also for possessives.

Celtic in English: Celtic/Brittonic language prevalent in Roman times in England. Latin persisted until c. 700 at latest in some parts (e.g. Pennines) but gradually died out before main thrust of (then "foreign") Anglo-Saxons which pushed Celtic to the West. Celtic elements persist in some place names: London, Dover, Leeds, York, Barrow, Penrith. Rivers called Avon. Place name elements: pen, tre, bryn, toot/twt. Celts themselves had arrived c. 700 BC. Language used by builders of Stonehenge remains uncertain.

Welsh words in English: **corgi, bard, combe, penguin, druid, flannel, gull**. Also foodstuff called **crumpet** (crempog) or **pikelet** (pyglyd) meaning dark bread. The "**wal**" element in the English word "Wales" corresponds to Wallonia, Wallachia, Gaul, Gallen (Switzerland), Walcot (local place name) indicating people who are the "other" or "outsiders".

Welsh word for English is **Saesneg** ("Saxon") corresponding to well-known Scots term "**sassenach**".

Chinese words in English

Many Chinese words have been adopted into English, either as **loanwords** or **direct translations** (calques), particularly in food, culture, and business contexts.

How these words entered English

Many of these words entered English during the 19th and 20th centuries through increased trade, cultural exchange, and migration, often arriving via Cantonese or Hokkien dialects. Hokkien is primarily spoken in Southern Fujian (China), Taiwan and across Southeast Asia, with major populations in Singapore, Malaysia Indonesia and the Philippines. It is a prominent, diverse language of the Chinese diaspora originating from Southern Fujian:

- via **missionaries** who were living in China.
- via **sinologists** who lived in China. Heavily influenced by French as the majority of sinologists were French.
- via the maritime **trade route** eg tea, Amoy - Fujian. Heavily influenced by the Amoy dialect in southern seaports.
- via the **early immigrants** to the American West during gold rush era, eg chop suey.
- via the multi-national **colonization** of Shanghai. Influenced by many European countries, as well as Japan.
- via the **British colonization** of Hong Kong, eg cheongsam (long dress with high collar, fitted waist and side slits which came to be worn by women). Heavily influenced by Cantonese.
- via **modern international communication**, especially after the 1970s when the People's Republic of China reduced up travel restrictions, allowing emigration to various countries, e.g. wushu (martial art like kung fu), feng shui (see below). Heavily influenced by Mandarin.

Common Chinese Words Used in English

Food & Drink:

Dim Sum (diǎn xīn):

Bok Choy (bái cài): A type of Chinese cabbage.

Wonton (yún tūn): A type of dumpling.

Ketchup (fān qié jiàng): Thought to have originated from a Hokkien dialect word for fish sauce. In the 17th century, the Chinese mixed a concoction of pickled fish and spices, called *kôe-chiap* or *kê-chiap* whose meaning refers to the brine of pickled fish or shellfish. By the early 18th century, the sauce had made it to the Malay peninsula, where it was later discovered by English explorers. That word then gradually evolved into the English word "ketchup", and was taken to the American colonies by English settlers.

To expand on “ketchup”:

British sailors encountered this savoury sauce in S E Asia (Malaysia/China) and tried to replicate it, eventually leading to **European mushroom/walnut variations before tomato ketchup emerged in the late 1880s**. The original Asian condiment was a dark thin savoury liquid, totally different from the modern tomato ketchup, often made from anchovies. The term likely came from the Malay word “kicap” or “kecap” pronounced “kaychap” which still refers to the fermented soy sauces in Indonesia.

By the late 17th / early 18thC it was known in England as ketchup or catchup or catsup. Early British recipes used ingredients like mushrooms, oysters and walnuts to simulate the savoury taste. Tomato ketchup first appeared in USA around 1812 and was popularised by producers such as Heinz to create the sweet and sour condiment we use today.

Tea (chá): Derived from the Chinese word *cha*.

Culture & Philosophy:

Feng Shui (fēng shuǐ): The art of harmonizing individuals with their environment. From wind' and water, denotes some form of aesthetic balance, generally in rooms or objects

Yin and Yang (yīn yáng): Yin and yang originated in ancient China, evolving over thousands of years from early observations of nature to a core philosophical concept. Initially representing the shady (yin) and sunny (yang) sides of a hill, it grew into a foundational theory in **Daoism** and Chinese cosmology by the 3rd century BCE to describe complementary, opposing forces in the universe.

Kung Fu (gōng fu)

Qigong (qì gōng)

Tai Chi (tài jí)

Social & Business:

Kowtow (kē tóu): literally "knock head". In traditional China, the act of supplication made by an inferior to his superior by kneeling and knocking his head to the floor

Tycoon (tàikūn): A wealthy, powerful business person (via Japanese, from Chinese *tai* 'great' + *kiun* 'lord').

Brainwash (xǐnǎo): A calque of Chinese. A term first used by the People's Volunteer Army during the Korean War, then picked up by the American media. It may refer to a forcible indoctrination to induce someone to give up basic political, social, or religious beliefs and attitudes and to accept contrasting regimented ideas. The term "brainwashing" came into the mainstream English language after Western media sources first utilized the term to describe the attitudes of POWs returning from the Korean War.

Chin Chin: lit. 'please', 'invite', an exclamation used to express good wishes before drinking.

Phrases – Semantic borrowing:

Originated In the 19th century, mocking the Pidgin English spoken by Chinese immigrants. A form of racist mockery.

Long time no see (hǎo jiǔ bù jiàn)

No can do (zuò bú dào)

Smörgåsbord

Taken directly from **Swedish**. A compound word consisting of three elements.

Smör- butter

Gås- goose or a lump of butter

Bord- a plank of wood/table

Apparently, the word **smörgås** came to mean a slice of bread and butter through a 16th century farming metaphor taken from the process of churning butter. During this, small lumps of butter would form and float to the surface and these reminded farmers of white geese on a lake. They would pick out the “butter geese” and spread them onto bread. So smorgasbord became a term to mean a table of bread and butter with a selection of toppings.

Origin (1500-1600) brännvinsbord (liquor table) as an appetiser with herring, bread and cheese before the main meal.

Evolution (1700-1800) moved from the side table to the main table and become known as smorgasbord 1912 Stockholm Olympics it was available in hotels and restaurants as a main meal.

A traditional order developed:

1-Pickled herring with potatoes

2-Other fish

3-Cold meat cuts

4-Warm dish ie meatballs

5-Cheese/dessert.

First recorded use in English was in Baedeker’s “Norway and Sweden” 1879 Worldwide spread via exposition at the New York World’s Fair 1939 As well as the original use to describe a particular layout of food, in English, the word is sometimes used to mean a collection/selection i.e.

- By the mid-1960’s there was a smorgasbord of post-colonial states across three continents (Cambridge English Corpus)
- We need a smorgasbord of physical activities and sport in the school curriculum (Hansard archive)

Rendezvous

French translates **literally to “present yourself” or “go to”**.

In English it can be used in verb form as in, “The cousins rendezvoused in London” but it’s rather clumsy and the spelling looks odd. It is more often used as a noun.

First recorded use in English writing was in 1556 as a noun, and as a verb in 1649. It was adopted into English from a French military phrase meaning a designated place for troops to assemble.

From circa 1600, it was used to denote “a meeting by appointment”. One particular use was for fur trade gatherings (maybe first used by French trappers in Canada).

In the 1960s it began to be used to describe specialised manoeuvres in outer space.

In literature it may be in verb or noun forms but more commonly as the latter. Often the word implies a hidden or secure meeting held in order to avoid scrutiny i.e. spies or lovers.

Examples:

- Alan Seeger, WWI American poet “I have a rendezvous with Death, At some disputed barricade.”
- Washington Irvine in “The Adventures of Captain Bonneville” - “To this rendezvous repair the various brigades of trappers from their widely separated hunting grounds... (refers to the Rocky Mountain annual meeting).
- Thomas Hardy in “The Mayor of Casterbridge”, re the Maumbury Rings (a Roman amphitheatre), Hardy writes “the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind”...a place for “clandestine rendezvous inside its basin”.

Doppelgänger

German compound word combining **doppel (double) and gänger (goer or walker)**.

It was coined by German author Johann Paul Friedrich Richter in the 1796 novel Siebenkäs.

The word refers to a **ghostly, identical double of a living person**. In German folklore, seeing your own doppelgänger, or seeing it as a friend, was believed to be a sign of misfortune, illness or death.

Its current use in English does not carry those ominous portents and it just means **any person who is a striking, unrelated look-alike of another**.

Aspects of Doppelgänger Mythology Death Omen: seeing your own doppelgänger is often regarded as a sign of death. It is recorded that Elizabeth I allegedly saw her double, pale and sickly, on her bed before her death. Double Walkers: means as above; a wraith that shadows a living person.

Cultural Variations:

- **Vardøger** which is a strange pre-appearance of a person that performs their actions before they arrive (Norse).
- **Ka** is a tangible spirit twin that holds the same memories and personality (Ancient Egypt). Fetch is an ethereal double whose appearance signals death (Irish).
- **Tomokazuki** a spirit which looks like a diver and causes illness (Japan).
- The notion of a doppelganger, evil double etc is an ancient idea. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the hero battles and then befriends his double, **Enkidu**.

Literary Doppelgängers:

- “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde “ by Robert Louis Stevens
- “The Picture of Dorian Gray “ by Oscar Wilde
- “William Wilson” by Edgar Allen Poe
- “The Secret Sharer” by Joseph Conrad Themes

In the above, doppelganger expresses:

- the divided nature of the human psyche forcing characters to confront their moral or hidden sides - duality and conflict
- a character’s insanity, paranoia or loss of identity - Gothic madness.
- a manifestation of a character’s sinful actions.

Tundra

From “Kildin Sami”, a term with a wide range of meaning: uplands; treeless mountain tract; marshy plain.

Entered English via the Russian word Tundra.

First appeared in English in 1824, probably via French which spelled it “toundra” and believed that it came from the Finnish word “tuntari”. However Finnish and Sami are in the same language group so the difference is probably insignificant.

“Crossing a second toundra, desert, of seven miles with infinite labour to the dogs and ourselves, we entered upon a most magnificent scenery.” (Narrative of a Pedestrian Journey through Russia and Siberian Tartary” by John Dundas Cochrane 1824 Captain John Dundas Cochrane (14 February 1793 – 12 August 1825) was a Scottish officer in the Royal Navy, traveller and explorer, an illegitimate son of Scottish MP, army-commander and swindler Andrew Cochrane-Johnstone.

Lingerie

from **French word “ligne”** for linen goods, things made from linen or clothes made from linen. Also stems from the **Latin “lineus” – made of flax.**

Adopted into English in the mid 19thC when it was used as a **euphemism for undergarments**, moving away from practical heavy garments towards lighter more delicate materials.

The **original meaning in 15thC France “lingerie” referred to a warehouse, shop or laundry room for linen goods. By 19thC it shifted to mean women’s’ delicate under garments in English**, often to avoid the vulgarity associated with the term under linen. Connotation: while historically just “underwear” was used which indicated that it could be for men, women and children, modern usage shifted to signify that lingerie meant fashionable, sexy or alluring under garments made of fine materials such as silk, lace or lightweight fabrics. The word was popularised in English around 1835-1852 to describe fine feminine undergarments.

Lingerie as outerwear: recently developed in the 20thC by pop singers such as Madonna who wore visible corsets in the 1990s. More recently, 2010 bralettes, corsets and bodysuits have become the fashion for some pop stars who have added body jewellery such as chains, torso belts, chain mail etc.

Loot

from Hindi word, “lut” (booty, plunder) and was adopted into English during the late 18thC, particularly through Anglo Indian usage during British colonial times. It traces back to the **Sanskrit word “loptam” or “lotram” meaning stolen property.**

The noun entered into English around 1788 with the verb “to loot “following in the 1840s. The original meaning meant goods seized from an enemy or stolen during war time. The colonial context: the term was popularised by the British East India Company’s activities in India, often to represent looted treasures brought back to Britain. The word is ultimately derived from the PIE root “reup”, meaning to snatch, making it related to the word rip.

The word was **considered an Anglo Indian term in the early 19th C before becoming a staple in English for describing theft, particularly in large scale chaotic scenarios “spoils of war” and “booty”.** Early examples from the 1800s appeared in British publications such as Blackwoods Edinburgh magazine which used it to describe plunder. The earliest formal definition appeared in John Ferguson’s dictionary of 1773 defined as of the Hindostan language for “booty, depredation, spoilage, plunder, pillage”. It is considered an ironic loan word as the British looted the word itself while looting goods from India.

Cartoon

dates back to 1670s and originates from Italian word *cartone* for strong heavy paper and in French *carton*. It was also used to describe thin pasteboard. It referred to the preliminary full scale drawings on strong paper used by artists to design frescos, tapestries, oil paintings. **By 1843 the term shifted in English to describe humorous or political sketches.** Publications such as Punch started using the term. Around 1910 the definition extended to animated moving images.

French phrases in English language

(Examples in common use sent in by Louise)

Agent provocateur. Someone who encourages other people to commit a crime so that they can be convicted. Literally, 'provocative agent'.

Au fait. Having a good knowledge/understanding about something. Literally, 'to the fact'.

Bon appétit. Enjoy the meal. Lit. Good appetite.

Bon mot. A witty remark. Lit. Good word.

Bon vivant. Someone who enjoys the pleasures of life. Lit. Good liver.

Cause célèbre. A controversial issue attracting widespread public interest. Lit. 'famous case'.

Coup d'état. A sudden seizure of power from a government, usually illegal, violent. Lit. 'blow of state'.

Crème de la crème. The very best person or thing. Lit. 'the cream of the cream'.

Cul-de-sac. A road closed at one end, a venture leading nowhere. Lit. 'bottom of the bag.'

Double entendre. A word or phrase that has two meanings, one is usually vulgar/sexual. Lit. 'double understanding',

Fait accompli. Something that has been already decided, leaving people no choice. Lit. 'accomplished fact'.

Faux pas. An embarrassing remark or act in a social situation. Lit. 'false step'.

Hors d'œuvre. A small, extra dish, usually a starter. Lit. 'outside the [main] work'.

Je ne sais quoi. A certain indescribable quality. Lit. 'I know not what'.

Laissez-faire. A attitude of letting things happen on their own. Li. 'allow to do'.

Nom de plume. A name that some authors use instead of their real name. Lit. 'pen name'.

Nouveau riche. People who have recently gained wealth and may be seen as showing off. Lit. 'new rich'.

Par excellence. Better than all the others of the same kind. Lit. 'by excellence'.

Pied-à-terre. A small home, kept for occasional use. Lit. 'foot to earth'.

Prêt-à-porter. Lit. 'ready to wear'.

RSVP. Abbreviation of *répondez s'il vous plait*. Lit. 'reply if it pleases you'.

Sang-froid. Composure, indifference in difficult circumstances. Lit. 'cold blood'.

Savoir-faire. Acting or speaking appropriately in social situations. Lit. 'know how to do'.

Tête-a-tête. A private conversation between two people. Lit. 'head to head'.

Trompe-l'œil. A visual illusion. Lit. 'deceive the eye'.

Vis-à-vis. In relation to, regarding, a face to face meeting. Lit. 'face to face'.

Anorak

Originally an Eskimo's waterproof, hooded jacket, the use of fur in the *anorak* design was widespread throughout the Arctic (caribou, sealskin, wolverine, wolf, or dog). Waterproofing of the garments was done by using strips of seal or walrus intestines, dried and whitened in the cold, with these then applied to the wrists and neck openings to prevent water entry. Fur placed on both sides of the neck of the *anorak* hood added protection of the head against ice formed by the wearer's breath.

The word ***anorak*** comes from the **Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) word “*annoraaq*”**. It did not appear in English until 1924 and was applied to Western imitations of this garment from 1930s.

Strictly speaking, an anorak is **a waterproof, hooded, pull-over jacket without a front opening, and sometimes drawstrings at the waist and cuffs**

In British slang, by 1983 it came to mean a man obsessively interested in an obscure subject and/or activity – typically trainspotting.

Parka

The words *anorak* and *parka* have been used interchangeably, but they are somewhat different garments. Strictly speaking (while anorak is a waterproof, hooded, pull-over jacket without a front opening, and sometimes drawstrings at the waist and cuffs), **a parka is a hip-length cold-weather coat, typically stuffed with down or very warm synthetic fibre, and with a fur-lined hood.**

The first record of the word parka in written English is in a 1625 work by Samuel Purchas. In another of the earliest instances identified, describing the people of the north Russian Arctic within a rare tome titled 'The English Atlas' Moses Pitt wrote: “Their garments are all of Fur; that next their bodies (called by them Mallek, or a shirt) of young Fawns, Hares, or Swans-skins, very soft and well-dressed; the outward (called Parka) of stronger and thicker Fur.”

Parka means a "hooded outer garment made of skins, worn by Eskimos", from the Aleut language (Aleutian islands form boundary between the Pacific and Bering Seas, between Alaska and Russia). ***Parka* meaning simply “animal skin”,** while the **Russian word *parka* means "a pelt or jacket made from pelt," from the Nenets language in Northern Siberia.** As the trade name of a similar wind-proof manufactured garment it was recorded by 1958.

Puffa

Name of company founded in 1973 by Penny Rogers, who was inspired by quilted jackets she saw on her travels to the US and Canada. It peaked in popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, attracting high-profile fans such as Diana, Princess of Wales, became so synonymous with its signature style that most quilted jackets are still referred to as “puffas”, although the name “Puffa” is a trademark and cannot be used by others. Global Brands acquired Puffa from Rogers in 2009

Cagoule

A cagoule is a lightweight, hooded waterproof jacket, typically thigh- or knee-length, designed for protection against rain and wind during outdoor activities.

The word *cagoule* derives from the French term *cagoule*, which literally means "" or "cowl," originating from the Latin *cucullus* via Old French *cogole*, referring to a hooded garment. Historically in French, it denoted a sleeveless hooded covering worn by monks or penitents.

The term entered British English in the 1950s as a borrowing from French, adopted by outdoor enthusiasts in the United Kingdom to describe lightweight, hooded waterproof jackets suitable for hiking and mountaineering. This usage gained traction among climbers and ramblers, particularly in post-war Britain, where such garments became popular for weather protection.

A cagoule can be rolled up into a very compact package and carried in a bag or pocket. It was popularised by the design of Noel Bibby for Peter Storm Ltd. in the early 1960s. It may have a full-zippered front opening, or pull over the head like an original anorak and close with snaps or a short zipper, has an integral hood, and elasticated or drawstring cuffs. In some versions, when rolled up, the hood doubles as a bag into which the rest of the coat is pushed. It became very popular in the United Kingdom during the 1970s.

By contrast, in modern French, *cagoule* primarily refers to a balaclava or ski mask—a close-fitting head covering—rather than a full jacket highlighting a semantic divergence between the languages.

Balaclava

This is what the French would call a “cagoule”. It was the "woollen head covering," with a hole for the eyes, especially worn by soldiers, evidently named after a village near Sebastopol, site of a battle Oct. 25, 1854, in the Crimean War.

But the term (originally *Balaclava helmet*) does not actually appear before 1881 and seems to have come into widespread use in the Boer Wars (late C19). The British troops suffered from the cold in the Crimean War, and the usage might be a remembrance of that conflict. The town name (*Balaklava*) often is said to be from Turkish, but is perhaps derived by popular “folk” usage from the original Greek “*Palakion*”.