

ENGLISHES

TESTI E CONTESTI DELLE LINGUE INGLESI

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## ENGLISHES

### TESTI E CONTESTI DELLE LINGUE INGLESI

Tra le lingue occidentali, l'inglese è quello che si è maggiormente evoluto, se non trasformato, fino a divenire la lingua della globalizzazione. Oggi, quindi, non si può più parlare di "English" bensì di "Englishes", ognuno dei quali si inserisce in un ben delineato contesto geografico e storico-politico dal quale ricava e afferma nuove e originali strutture grammaticali e lessicografiche. È il caso dell'anglo-americano, dell'anglo-canadese e dell'anglo-australiano, ormai realtà consolidate e codificate, così come è il caso dell'anglo-caraibico, dell'anglo-indiano e dell'anglo-africano (nelle sue diverse accezioni) che sono tuttora realtà "in progress" e, proprio in virtù di ciò, le più interessanti e innovative.

La Collana intende, pertanto, ospitare studi filologici e linguistici, testi grammaticali e lessicografici che possano coadiuvare l'insegnamento dell'inglese moderno e aiutare la comprensione e l'insegnamento delle letterature che di questi "Englishes" sono espressione.



Franco Tondi

**German loanwords in English**





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## Introduction

This research study, dealing with the influence of German on English vocabulary, originates from my own life experience. Born in Germany from Italian parents, I received my education there, in two German schools, where I also learnt English. This circumstance aroused my interest not only in the common origin of the two languages, German and English, but also in their later and more recent contacts.

The objective of this work is to demonstrate, by the use of lexicographic and corpus analytic techniques, the presence of German loanwords in the English language, and to explore these. It is a topic not characterised by a particularly vast bibliography, since the area has not, hitherto, received the scholarly attention it deserves. The most important authors dealing with the German influence on English vocabulary have been Jay A. Pfeffer, Anthony W. Stanforth and, very recently, Robbin D. Knapp. Scholars and linguists have generally tended to concentrate on the opposite phenomenon; that is to say, the influence of English on other languages.

The work consists of an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, four appendixes and a final bibliography. The first chapter outlines early cultural contacts between German and English, and has the following sub-headings: German immigration to the United States; The great importance of German natural sciences; The First and the Second World War; The Protestant Reformation.

The second chapter presents an overview of research, and consists in a survey of the work which has been done in this field so far. The various authors are listed in chronological order and briefly introduced. American English was the focus for the first studies of this kind, from the 1870s onwards; only in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did British English begin to be studied. However, the German cultural borrowings in British English are in reality much more numerous than the intimate borrowings that characterize American English vocabulary. These words are mostly scientific, German coinages, which

often disguise their German origin, since they usually have a Greek or a Latin etymon.

The third chapter discusses four different types of German borrowing categories: Loanwords, Loan translations, Semantic loans, and Partial loan translations. The chapter also explores the graphemic, phonetic and semantic alterations that the German loanwords underwent after their transfer from German to English.

The first part of the fourth chapter deals with the description of a German dialect called “Pennsylvania German” or “Pennsylvania Dutch”. Nowadays, its usage is almost entirely limited to the Amish people, but formerly it was spoken in vast areas of Pennsylvania. The following two sections show the reciprocal influence of Pennsylvania German on American English and vice versa.

Having dealt with important background notions, the thesis now moves to its specific scientific focus. Chapter 5 contains the results of lexicographic analyses carried out on three dictionaries (those of Knapp, Pfeiffer and Schönfelder). The lexicographical work consisted in searching for the German loanwords enumerated by these authors in four contemporary on-line dictionaries: the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), Merriam Webster and its online version Merriam Webster.com, and the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE). This section presents the peculiarities and divergences encountered in this research. In the final section of chapter five, German loanwords are classified into lexicographic categories.

The final chapter deals both with the creation of a scientific corpus to explore the presence of Germanisms in contemporary English scientific texts, and with a thorough analysis of the Germanisms identified by Knapp. The principle intention is to provide examples of current usage of these Germanisms, taken from the British National Corpus (BNC) and from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). A lexicographic investigation was also carried out in order to demonstrate the inclusion of Knapp’s loanwords in contemporary English lexicography.

The overall conclusion of the work is that the intrinsic interest of the subject, as well as the scant critical and scientific interest it has so far aroused, are sufficient reasons to explore it further; some findings of especial interest are underlined.