

THE ENGLISH EFFECT

A global language

Top ten English words with overseas origins

1. DOLLAR (GERMAN)

Despite being synonymous with America's financial might, the word originates from the German *Taler* (short for *Joachimstaler*). This was a coin first minted in 1519 from silver mined in Joachimsthal. The word occurs in English from the mid-1500s, referring to various silver coins – including Spanish coins used in the British colonies in North America at the time of the War of Independence. The dollar was adopted as the US currency in 1785.



2. BOOZE (DUTCH)

Booze (earlier *bouse*) comes from the medieval Dutch verb *būsen* 'to drink to excess'. It appeared in medieval English, but it is found more frequently in the 1500s, in the language of thieves and beggars, from where it gradually spread to general slang and colloquial use.



3. BUNGALOW (HINDI OR BENGALI)

Don't believe the rumours that the word was coined when a builder was told to 'bung a low roof' on a property after running out of bricks. *Bungalow* was first recorded in the 1600s referring to one-storey houses built for early European incomers in Bengal. It comes from a Hindi or Bengali word meaning 'belonging to Bengal'.



4. TOMATO (NAHUATL – MEXICO)

Tomato came into English in the 1600s, from Spanish. However, Spanish had itself borrowed the word in the 1530s, soon after the conquest of the Aztec empire. The word originates from Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs), in which the word is *tomatl*, and may come from *tomau*, 'to grow'.



5. ZOMBIE (WEST AFRICAN via the CARIBBEAN)

Zombie has its origins in West African languages – Kikongo *zumbi* (fetish) and Kimbundu *nzambi* (god) – although it came into English (in the early 1800s or earlier) via the religious beliefs of communities in the Caribbean (where *jumbee* means 'spirit' or 'demon'), the southern US, and other parts of the Americas who had been brought from Africa as part of the slave trade.



6. VAMPIRE (HUNGARIAN)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the origins of *vampire* lie in Eastern Europe, a region where Dracula, the most famous of all vampires, is said to have come from. The word is found in English in the early 1700s, and comes from Hungarian *vampir*, via French *vampire*.



7. PARKA (RUSSIAN)

Parka came into English from Russian in the 1620s, but it originated among the Nenets people of the Arctic regions of Russia, and originally referred to the type of jacket made from animal skins that they wore. In the 1890s it began to be found referring to a hooded winter coat.



8. SHAMPOO (HINDI)

Shampoo entered English in the mid-1700s as a result of increasing British involvement in South Asia. Its probable origin is Hindi *cāmpo*, meaning 'press'. The original meaning in English was 'to massage'. Over time the meaning became 'to wash or scrub (the head or hair)', and finally *shampoo* came to mean the substance for washing the hair.



9. MAGAZINE (ARABIC)

The idea behind the *magazine* that you read was originally that it was a 'storehouse' for articles. The word entered English from French in the 1500s, but originates in Arabic, in which *maḡzin* means 'storehouse'. This can be seen in modern French *magasin* meaning 'shop', as well as in modern English military uses of *magazine*.



10. AVATAR (SANSKRIT)

Long before James Cameron's film, the word *Avatar* came from Sanskrit – where it meant 'the descent of a Hindu deity to the Earth in bodily form' – when it entered English in the late 1700s. The modern use of the word in science fiction emerged in the mid-1980s.

