Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• Purpose of the Class
  – principally practical: to improve English vocabulary
    • not by memorization alone
    • but by understanding the history, development and essential components of English words
  – focus on the impact of classical languages (Latin and Greek)
    – around 70% of English vocabulary
      • more than that if scientific/technical terms are included
    – in sum, a classical house built on a Germanic foundation
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• the intended results of the class
  – to learn how to recognize the classical elements in English words
  – to be able to figure out the meaning of a word you’ve never seen before
    • a word from classical roots
    • and figure it out in context (i.e. a sentence)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• the nature of the class: lecture + practice
  – lecture: concepts and principles of language change
    • practical linguistics
    • e.g. assimilation of consonants, folk etymology, hybrids
  – practice: analysis of specific English words made up of classical elements
    • unfamiliar words, e.g. iatraliptic (“curing by ointment”)
    • and familiar words, e.g. consider (to be “with the stars”)

• Homework: preparation for in-class work
  – read chapters, do exercises, memorize word elements
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• Texts:
  – Ayers, *English Words from Latin and Greek Elements* (2nd edition, revised by Worthen)
  – a good dictionary, with etymologies
  – web site:
    http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/syllabus/coursedescription.htm
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• **Grades:** 5 Quizzes + 2 Tests (Midterm, Final)
  – based on classwork, especially word analysis in context
  – also questions on the principles of language formation and change presented in the text and lectures
  – no finals before the assigned date/time
  – make-ups only with a proper excuse and within a week of the original date of the quiz/test
  – incompletes in strict accordance with university policy
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Introduction to the Class

• **Warning:** you must know parts of speech, in particular: noun, verb, adjective
  – noun: person, place or thing
    • e.g., king, palace, crown
  – verb: action word
    • e.g., rule, inhabit, crown
  – adjective: modifier or descriptor
    • e.g., royal, palatial, crowning
  – see underlined words on syllabus
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• difficulties inherent in the English language
  – bizarre spelling (often because of French influence)
  – convoluted grammar
    • How do you do?
    • impregnate vs. impregnable

• cf. foreigners’ difficulties with English
  – USU exchange student: “I want a pizza and step on it.”
  – laundry in Rome: “Ladies, leave your clothes here and then spend the afternoon having a good time.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• cf. foreigners’ difficulties with English
  – sign in Japanese hotel: “You are invited to take advantage of the chamber maid.”
  – sign in Moscow hotel: “If this is your first visit to Russia, you are welcome to it.”
  – sign in Zurich hotel: “Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, we suggest you use the lobby for this purpose.”
  – sign in Norwegian bar: “Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language
• cf. foreigners’ difficulties with English
  – sign in a Budapest zoo: “Please do not feed the animals. If you have suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.”
  – traffic instruction in Tokyo: “When a passenger of the foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet at him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage, then tootle him with vigor.”
  – sign in Hong Kong tailor: “Ladies may have a fit upstairs.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• immense vocabulary in English
  – OED lists ca. 615,000 words
  • granted, only 450,000 in current usage
  • but millions more, with scientific/technical terms
  – French has only 150,000
  – Russian has under 125,000
  – hence, the popularity of a thesaurus in English
  • vs. Italian
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• Why is there so much vocabulary in English?
  – native Germanic vocabulary is small – both in the number and size of the words
  • but these words make up 80% of any words on a page
  – the rest – and almost all the big words! – is mostly from Latin and Greek roots
  • with some input for other languages
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• Why is there such a large classical overlay?
  – the early history of England is full of conquest and domination by foreigners
    • ca. 1000 BCE: Indo-European Celts infiltrate Britain
    • ca. 40 CE: Romans
    • ca. 400 CE: Anglo-Saxons
    • 800’s CE: Danish invasions
    • 1066 CE: Norman invasion
  – later, through colonization the English become conquerors
    • other languages influence English-speaking colonists
Latin and Greek Elements in English

The Nature of the English Language

• Solutions to learning the complexities of English

  – **Grammar**: be a native speaker;
    • he returned the *cherries uneaten* (all of them) vs. he returned the *uneaten cherries* (some of them)
    • in possession of (owning) vs. in *the* possession of (owned)
    • living with pain vs. living with a pain
    • Queen Mary vs. *the* Queen Mary

  – **Spelling/Vocabulary**: learn Latin and Greek
    • or understand as much as you can about them!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Assignment for the next class

• **Textbook (Ayers):** read pp. 1-14 (Introduction)
  – do all exercises on those pages; the answers to these exercises are available on line:
    [http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/intro.htm](http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/intro.htm)
  – print out the lecture outline for the next class and bring this handout to the next class:
    [http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/index.htm](http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/answers/index.htm)
  – **Homework to be turned in:** write down a word (or two) the etymology of which you’ve always wondered about
    • put the word/s and your name on a piece of paper and turn them in at the beginning of the next class