There are four basic ways whereby words enter a language. There are the original words, so old we can trace them no further. In English, this is a handful of Celtic words. Next, there are imposed words: those forced upon a people by their conquerors. After the Celts, these were the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons (including the Jutes), the Danes, and the Norman-French. Finally, there are invented words and borrowed words.

English is unique in the number and variety of its borrowed words. At least 80 per cent of our spoken and written vocabulary is Anglo-Saxon and Romance. But a random count of 1032 words from a 57,000-word dictionary revealed:

- 312 Latin
- 284 French (including Norman)
- 214 Anglo-Saxon
- 61 Greek
- 56 Unknown
- 13 Dutch
- 11 Spanish
- 10 German
- 9 Italian
- 8 Hindu
- 7 Arabic
- 5 Icelandic, Persian
- 4 Irish
- 3 Gaelic, Scotch, Chinese
- 2 Algonquin, Malay, Australian, Russian, East Indian
- 1 Javanese, Swedish, South African, South American, Eskimo, Singalese, West African, Dravidian, Japanese, Malayasy, Bengali, Sanskrit, Swahili, Mexican

Over the years, I have been accumulating fairly common words borrowed from other languages. Here is my list of 69; can readers make additions?

- Afrikaans: apartheid
- Algonquin: moose
- Akkadian: babble
- Amharic: zebra
- Amoy: cumshaw
- Angolan: goober
- Arabic: henna
- Arawak: macaw

Not all borrowed words became a part of our language. Some words 'blue' wasizzered from them. The conquerors from Spain.

Other borrowed words became part of our language. Some words from them then became part of our language as they reached us from Spain.
Not all borrowings are direct. Akkadian was an extinct language long before the first Celt entered Europe. We borrowed 'babble' from them through Hebrew. It may well be the most ancient word in our language.

Other borrowings are more circuitous. The Sanskrit word for 'blue' was nila. When the Aryans conquered Persia, the Persian word became nilak and later lilak. The Arabs borrowed the Persian word and carried it with them to Spain when they conquered that country. They were eventually driven out, but left the word behind. The English then borrowed lilac, the name of the flower, from Spain.

Some words are borrowed, but we don't know from whom. When our proto-Germanic ancestors left their Indo-European heartland to conquer Europe, they had never seen immense bodies of water. When they reached the ocean, they adopted the word sea. It was probably borrowed from the tongue of some now-extinct Neolithic tribe.

I like borrowed words!