

Cognates & Loanwords

Languages

Two ways words in different languages come to resemble each other.

Cognates — inherited

- Descended from a shared ancestor
- English 'father', German 'Vater', Latin 'pater'
- Sound correspondences are regular
- Evidence of family relationship

Loanwords — borrowed

- Taken from another language
- 'Sushi', 'ballet', 'kindergarten'
- Can cross unrelated families
- Evidence of contact, not descent

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

English is Germanic by descent, with an enormous French and Latin loan vocabulary layered on top.

Roughly 60% of English vocabulary comes from Latin and French — but the commonest words are almost all Germanic.