

Language Change

LING 201

7 May 2024

Prof. Pentangelo

Quiz

Choose any two questions to respond to.
Don't respond to all three!

1. What is Proto-Indo-European?
2. What is the connection that John McWhorter makes between language change over time and the vast number of languages that we have today?
3. What are two ways in which a language can change over time? Give examples. (David Crystal and John McWhorter both provided plenty in their chapters — feel free to use any of these.)

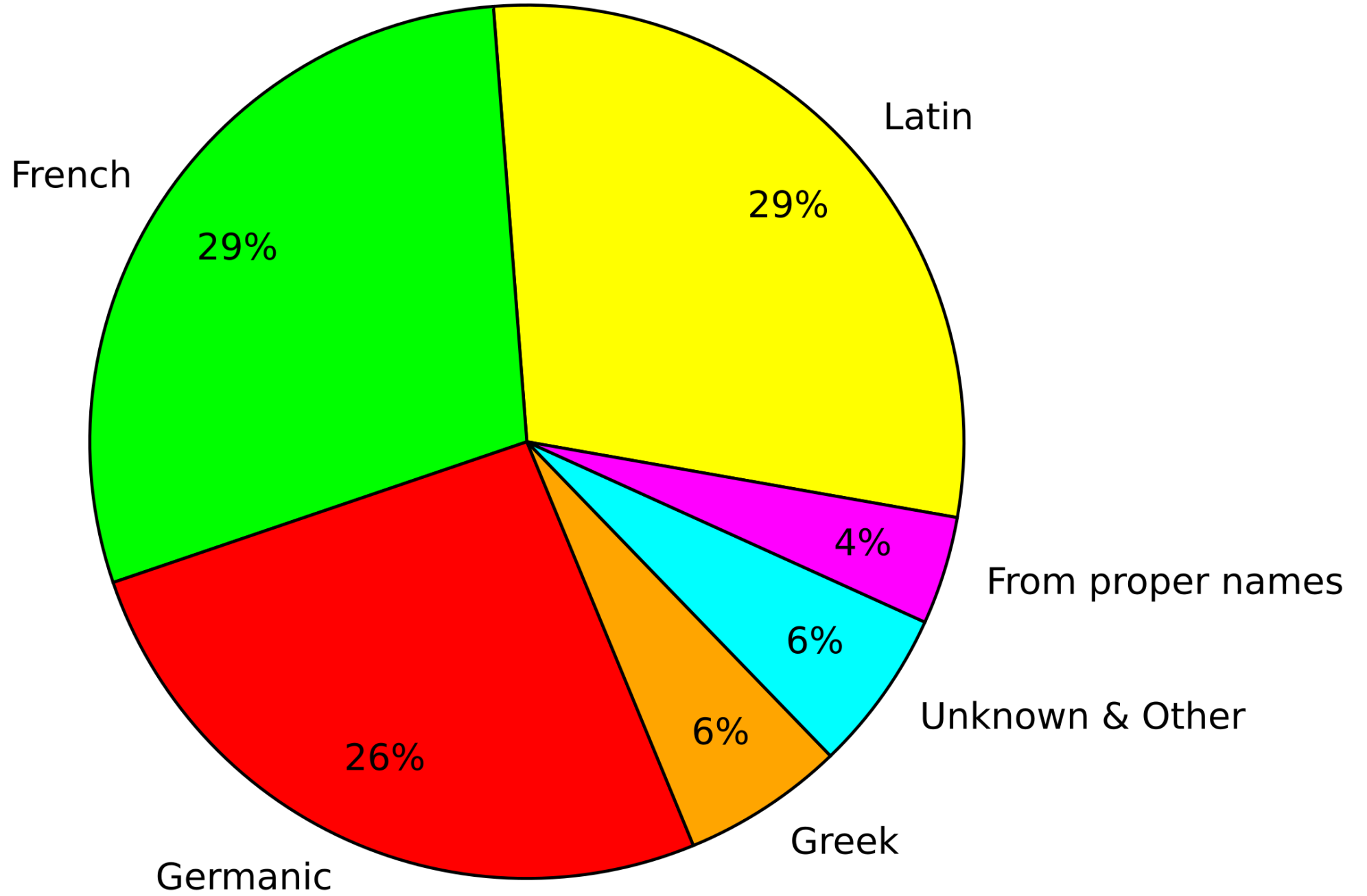
“Languages are always changing. It’s as inevitable for them to change as it is for cloud patterns in the sky to take on new forms. [...] It’s the same way with languages—every language is in the process of changing into a new one.” — John McWhorter, 33–34

“Every part of language changes. It’s not just the words. Grammar changes. Pronunciation changes. The way we talk to each other changes. Even spelling and punctuation change. But not everything changes at the same rate.” — David Crystal, 133

Change and Linguistic Diversity

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmg4ymA2XP8>

Origins of English Words



For next week...

- Rather than a weekly discussion thread, watch this video. I made it last year but it covers some parts I couldn't get to tonight:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCarK3wSnPA>
Ignore the slang reading by McWhorter I mention on there — we didn't read it this year.

- Blog Post #4:
The readings for this week deal with language change. What is made clear throughout is that all languages are constantly changing; this is, and has always been, the normal situation for every language.

With that in mind, I'd like you to turn your focus on your own language – whether it be English or another language that you speak or grew up speaking. After doing the reading, I'd like you to talk to someone older than yourself – a parent, a grandparent, a mentor, anyone at least 10 years older than you – about changes they've noticed between the way that they grew up speaking your language, and the way that you speak your language. Is your accent different? Do you use different words? Did the spelling system change at all? Report your findings. 250 words.

- Read *Encyclopedia of the World's Endangered Languages* pp.vii–xvi and the paragraph-long description of any endangered or extinct language from North America. You will briefly discuss this language during our next class, which will count as your quiz grade.