**Lesson: When we talk about English**

**Focus: Vocabulary, Preposition Usage, Speaking.**

**Warm up (5 min)**

* Do you know what a romance language is?
* What about Germanic languages? Do you know which languages belong to this family?
* What is a dialect?
* What’s the difference between a dialect and a language?

**1. Comprehension (Video Watching) (10 min)**

**Directions:** Watch the lesson video (*When We Talk About English*) and answer the following questions:

**1.1. General Comprehension**:

**Question:** What is the video about? What story does it tell us?

**1.2. Specific Comprehension:**

**Directions:** According to what you read, organize the following events chronologically:

\_\_\_\_\_The Normans invaded England.

\_\_\_\_\_ Proto-Indo-European was spoken in modern day Ukraine and Russia.

\_\_\_\_\_The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes brought their dialects to the British Isles.

\_\_\_\_\_Latin-rooted words came into English language.

\_\_\_\_\_The Germanic dialects spoken by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes gradually became known as Anglo-Saxon.

\_\_\_\_\_ Proto-Germanic language evolved.

\_\_\_\_\_Viking invaders added more borrowings from Old Norse into ancient English.

**2. Grammar: Preposition Usage (Video Transcript) (10 min)**

**Directions:** Readthe video transcript outload for pronunciation purposes. As you read, fill in the blanks with the correct prepositions according to the context.

*When we talk \_\_\_\_\_\_ English, we often think \_\_\_\_\_it as a single language but what do the dialects spoken \_\_\_\_ dozens of countries around the world have \_\_\_\_ common \_\_\_\_ each other, or with the writings of Chaucer[[1]](#footnote-1)? And how are any of them related \_\_\_\_ the strange words in Beowulf? The answer is that like most languages, English has evolved through generations \_\_\_\_ speakers, undergoing major changes over time.*

*By undoing these changes, we can trace the language from the present day back \_\_\_\_\_ its ancient roots. While modern English shares many similar words with Latin-derived romance languages, like French and Spanish, most of those words were not originally part \_\_\_\_ it. Instead, they started coming into the language with the Norman invasion \_\_\_\_\_ England \_\_\_\_\_ 1066. When the French-speaking Normans conquered England and became its ruling class, they brought their speech with them, adding a massive amount \_\_\_\_\_French and Latin vocabulary \_\_\_\_\_the English language previously spoken there.*

*Today, we call that language Old English. This is the language of Beowulf. It probably doesn't look very familiar, but it might be more recognizable if you know some German. That's because Old English belongs \_\_\_\_\_ the Germanic language family, first brought to the British Isles in the 5th and 6th centuries \_\_\_\_\_ the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. The Germanic dialects they spoke would become known \_\_\_\_\_ Anglo-Saxon. Viking invaders in the 8th to 11th centuries added more borrowings \_\_\_\_\_\_ Old Norse into the mix.*

*It may be hard to see the roots \_\_\_\_\_\_ modern English underneath all the words borrowed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ French, Latin, Old Norse and other languages. But comparative linguistics can help us \_\_\_\_\_\_ focusing \_\_\_\_\_ grammatical structure, patterns of sound changes, and certain core vocabulary. For example, after the 6th century, German words starting \_\_\_\_\_ "p," systematically shifted \_\_\_\_ a "pf" sound while their Old English counterparts kept the "p" unchanged. In another split, words that have "sk" sounds in Swedish developed an "sh" sound in English. There are still some English words with "sk," like "skirt," and "skull," but they're direct borrowings \_\_\_\_\_\_ Old Norse that came after the "sk" to "sh" shift.*

*These examples show us that just as the various Romance languages descended from Latin, English, Swedish, German, and many other languages descended \_\_\_\_\_ their own common ancestor known as Proto-Germanic spoken around 500 B.C.E. Because this historical language was never written down, we can only reconstruct it \_\_\_\_\_\_ comparing its descendants, which is possible thanks \_\_\_\_\_ the consistency of the changes. We can even use the same process to go back one step further, and trace the origins of Proto-Germanic to a language called Proto-Indo-European, spoken about 6000 years ago on the Pontic steppe \_\_\_\_ modern day Ukraine and Russia. This is the reconstructed ancestor of the Indo-European family that includes nearly all languages historically spoken \_\_\_\_ Europe, as well as large parts \_\_\_\_\_ Southern and Western Asia.*

*And though it requires a bit more work, we can find the same systematic similarities, or correspondences, between related words in different Indo-European branches. Comparing English \_\_\_\_ Latin, we see that English has "t" where Latin has "d", and "f" where Latin has "p" at the start \_\_\_\_\_ words. Some of English's more distant relatives include Hindi, Persian and the Celtic languages it displaced in what is now Britain. Proto-Indo-European itself descended \_\_\_\_\_ an even more ancient language, but unfortunately, this is as far back as historical and archeological evidence will allow us to go. Many mysteries remain just out \_\_\_\_\_ reach, such as whether there might be a link between Indo-European and other major language families, and the nature \_\_\_\_ the languages spoken \_\_\_\_ Europe prior \_\_\_\_\_ its arrival. But the amazing fact remains that nearly 3 billion people around the world, many \_\_\_\_\_ whom cannot understand each other, are nevertheless speaking the same words shaped \_\_\_\_\_ 6000 years of history.*

**3. Vocabulary Practice (15 min)**

**3.1. Synonyms**

**Directions:** Say the underlined words some other way.

1. When we talk about English, we often think of it as a single language.
2. English has evolved through generations of speakers, undergoing major changes over time.
3. It may be hard to see the roots of modern English underneath all the words borrowed from French, Latin, Old Norse and other languages.
4. German words starting with "p," systematically shifted to a "pf" sound.
5. English, Swedish, German, and many other languages descended from their own common ancestor known as Proto-Germanic spoken around 500 B.C.E.
6. There might be a link between Indo-European and other major language families, and the nature of the languages spoken in Europe prior to its arrival.
7. But the amazing fact remains that nearly 3 billion people around the world are nevertheless speaking the same words shaped by 6000 years of history.

**3.2. Word Families**

**Directions:** Fill in the chartwith the verb-noun familiesindicated. Then, choose either the verb or the noun to complete the corresponding sentences.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **VERB** | **NOUN** | **Which one would you use? The verb or the noun in the family?** |
| evolve |  | The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of English is not so easy to trace back in time. |
|  | speaker | English has evolved through generations of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  |
| derive |  | Modern English \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from a variety of dialects.  |
|  | invasion | The Normans \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to England changed the history of English language.  |
| conquer |  | The Normans \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ England and became the ruling class.  |
|   | borrowing | Old English \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lots of words from French language.  |
| focus |  | Comparative linguistics\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on comparing different languages. |
|  | structure | We’ll find similarities in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of German, Swedish and English. |
|  | descendant | Germanic languages \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_from a common Proto-Germanic family.  |
| reconstruct  |  | Linguists have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the story of English up to a certain extent. |
| include |  | Normans are responsible for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Latin roots into Old English.  |
|   | correspondence | We cannot deny the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ between English and romance languages. |
|  | relative | Other English language relatives are Hindi, Persian and the Celtic languages. |
|  | link | Surprisingly, there might be a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ between all of the world languages. |
| shape |  | Ancient English was definitely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by a variety of historical events.  |

**4. Speaking**

**4.1. Giving Opinion**

* How many languages do you speak? (If so, which was did you learn easier?)
* Was English hard to learn for you?
* Did you know anything about the history of English language?
* As a Spanish speaker, which languages do you think are easier to learn? Romance or Germanic languages?
* Some linguists are already speaking about the possible emergence of a global language due to effects of globalization. What type of language do you think it would be? Do you like this idea?

**4.2. Summarizing**

**Directions:** Watch the lesson video again and summarize the origins of Modern English language. The following diagram may serve as a basis.

**Norman Invasion to England:**

The French-speaking Normans became the ruling class and Latin words were added (Old English).

1. Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) was an English poet and author. Widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages, he is best known for The Canterbury Tales. He has been called the "father of English literature", or, alternatively, the "father of English poetry".  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)