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## **An Analysis of the Celtic and Slavic Elements in the German Language**

Elizabeth Crail  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Julie Prandi, Faculty Advisor  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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## AN ANALYSIS OF THE CELTIC AND SLAVIC ELEMENTS IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

Elizabeth Crail, Dept. of Foreign Lang., IWU, Julie Prandi\*

This analysis concerns the linguistic history of the German language and concentrates on the specific influence exerted on it by the Celtic and Slavic tongues with which it came in contact. The sources are a number of general studies on German linguistic history, some of which are specifically oriented toward the Slavic elements. Due to the different periods in which the various sources were written, the determination of the actual word sources vary, sometimes considerably. For this reason it was necessary to compare the relative merits of the arguments for or against any particular source before personally determining its validity. This was made possible by general linguistic studies throughout the semester which afforded the necessary knowledge to make such decisions.

Since the Celtic language was the earliest for which there is any proof that it exerted influence on the German language, such comparisons are very important not only for understanding some of the earliest word origins, but also for facts about the unwritten history of the early Germanic tribes. For instance, the German word "Reich", meaning kingdom or empire is considered to have been borrowed from the Celts primarily on account of the vowel. While the word "Reich" is related to the Latin "rex", it must have come from the Celtic "rig", also related to "rex", because of the "ei" sound in the modern form of the word. The knowledge that words of this nature were borrowed from the Celts suggests that the Celtic culture was more advanced in many ways than the original Germanic tribes which wandered into the area.

The Slavic loan words found in German are much less prevalent and very random in area of influence, because most of the contact was after the Germans were the more advanced culture, and therefore most of the borrowing was German words into the Slavic tongues rather than the other way around. The different Germanic languages and dialects have been differently influenced by other languages depending on which part of Germany they originated in. The Celtic influence is much stronger in the southwest of Germany, whereas the Slavic influence is stronger in the southeast German-speaking areas, particularly in Vienna.

The study of such linguistic influences makes not only for a better understanding of the language itself, but also of the history of the people and thus their relationships with the peoples who influenced them and their language.