The Vikings not only brought their material culture with them to Anglo-Saxon England: they also brought their language. The first Scandinavian settlers spoke a language now called Old Norse, a Northern Germanic language with many local dialects.

These dialects were spoken across what are now Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and were taken to Iceland when the Vikings settled there. Modern Icelandic is the closest surviving form of this medieval tongue; many Icelanders today can still easily enjoy the medieval Icelandic sagas of the 12th-14th centuries in their original written form.

Anglo-Saxons spoke Old English, the ancestor to our modern language. Old English was another Germanic language, with close kinship to Old Norse, so it is plausible that Old English and Old Norse speakers could, to a certain extent, understand one another. Early medieval Scandinavians had a notable effect on the development of modern English: words such as skirt, sky, window, and egg are all derived from Old Norse. Loanwords such as these are evidence of the integration of Scandinavian culture into Anglo-Saxon England.

This integration is further displayed in English place-names in the Danelaw area, where there is a wealth of English-Norse hybrid names.

The Scandinavians also brought their system of writing with them: runes. The runic alphabet the Viking settlers employed is known as the Younger Futhark and consists of sixteen characters that represent the most common spoken sounds in Old Norse. The Scandinavian settlers commonly used runes to mark possessions, memorialise their dead on runestones, and celebrate their achievements.