



The World of Languages and Languages of the World

Secret Languages

Let's explore some secret languages.

Can you make your own?

**Why
would
people
want
to create
a secret
language?**



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Pig Latin

Pig Latin is not actually a language but a language game that children (and some adults) use to speak “in code.” Pig Latin words are formed by altering words in English.

Germans call it *Kedelkloppersprook*; in Swedish, it's *Fikonspråket*, *alfabeto farfallino* in Italian, *loucherbem* in French, *Jeringonza* in Spanish.

Though it's not an official language, you could say it's kind of a world language



Lovicz 2010

Ivatepray eacefulpay

Artemisway owlpay

Arryhay otterpay andway ethay amberchay ofway ecretssay

Oodnightgay istermay omtay

Ethay ionlay ethay itchway andway ethay ardrobeway

Ethay oybay inway ethay ipedstray yjamaspay

How would we write these words in Pig Latin?

Out

Ask

End

Bed

Cat

Shoe

Pen

What are the rules?

Words starting with a vowel: _____

Words starting with a consonant: _____

—

Reduplication: Tennis-schmennis (UKLO)

When speakers of English want to indicate some degree of scepticism or derision (that is to say, they don't much like something, or find it odd) in response to something they have heard, they sometimes use a reduplication pattern as follows.

Speaker A: I want to watch the tennis.

Speaker B: Tennis-shmennis. We're watching the football.

Speaker A: I think we should paint the hallway blue.

Speaker B: Blue-shmoo. It should be green.

What is the function of reduplication in these sentences?



a. Do you want a soft drink or a drink-drink?

b. Do you mean American football or football-football?

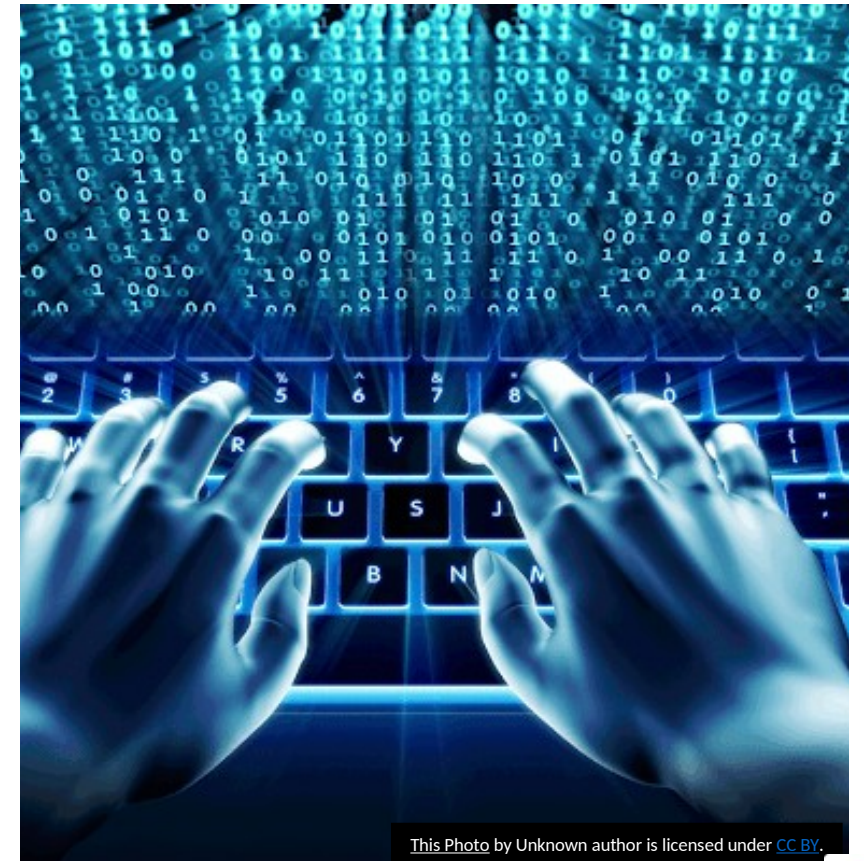
c. Oh no, you've misunderstood: they're not living-together living-together.

d. I don't want an e-book, I want a book-book.

Leet

Leet, Leet speak, or Hackspeak works by replacing individual letters in a word with a single number, symbol, or group of numbers or symbols that resembles the letter.

For instance, “Hacker” is spelled “|-|@k3r,” where “|-|” represents “H,” “@” represents “a,” “k” represents “ck,” “3” represents “e,” and “r” remains unchanged.



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Lunfardo

Prisoners in Argentina use Lunfardo to secretly communicate among themselves.

The language, which was first used by members of the Buenos Aires lower class, contains words from languages like Spanish and Italian.

It has over 5,000 words, and one of its mainstay is the use of verse—the switching of a word's syllables. *Cafe*, for instance, is pronounced *feca*.



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Nushu

Nushu, which means “women’s writing,” is a female-only language used by Chinese women.

It originated in China’s Hunan province around 15 BC, when women—who were forbidden from getting an education—formed and used it to secretly communicate among themselves.

The language was a well-kept secret and only became known to the West in the 1980s.



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Polari

Polari sprung up in the 1700s and 1800s as a secret language vagrants, performers, sailors and “gypsies” – many of its words, in fact, derive from the Romany people scattered across Europe.

It became the unofficial language of gay men in Britain between the 1930s and 1960s, when being gay was illegal. Polari allowed gay people to talk secretly.

Polari was spoken to skirt the UK’s strict anti-homosexuality laws. Though largely forgotten, some of its words can be found in dictionaries today.

Bevvy – drink Scarper – run away

Naff – rubbish Butch - masculine



Over to you...

Make a quick new language with your partner.

Take an English word and add to it or change it slightly. Try to do the same for all words in a sentence.

Now show your language to another group. Can they work out what you have done to English to make your new language?

A final thought ...

- Secret languages are made for:
- Fun
- Exclusivity
- To keep secrets
- Criminal activity
- Forbidden activity
- Wartime activity
- Can you think of any more?

Acknowledgements

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