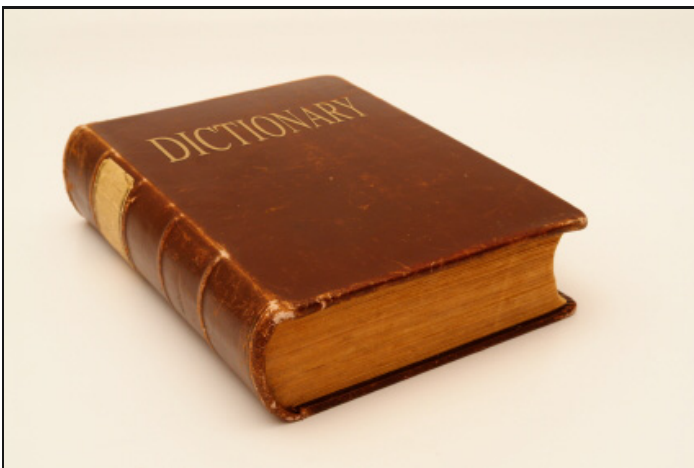


mental_floss Blog » 15 Wonderful Words With No English Equivalent

The Global Language Monitor estimates that there are currently 1,009,753 words in the English language. Despite this large lexicon, many nuances of human experience still leave us tongue-tied. And that's why sometimes it's necessary to turn to other languages to find *le mot juste*. Here are fifteen foreign words with no direct English equivalent.



1. Zhaghzhagh (Persian)

The chattering of teeth from the cold or from rage.

2. Yuputka (Ulwa)

A word made for walking in the woods at night, it's the phantom sensation of something crawling on your skin.

3. Slampadato (Italian)

Addicted to the UV glow of tanning salons? This word describes you.

4. Luftmensch (Yiddish)

There are several Yiddish words to describe social misfits. This

one is for an impractical dreamer with no business sense. Literally, air person.

5. Iktsuarpok (Inuit)

You know that feeling of anticipation when you're waiting for someone to show up at your house and you keep going outside to see if they're there yet? This is the word for it.

6. Cotisuelto (Caribbean Spanish)

A word that would aptly describe the prevailing fashion trend among American men under 40, it means one who wears the shirt tail outside of his trousers.

7. Pana Po'o (Hawaiian)

"Hmm, now where did I leave those keys?" he said, pana po'oing. It means to scratch your head in order to help you remember something you've forgotten.



8. Gumusservi (Turkish)

Meteorologists can be poets in Turkey with words like this at their disposal. It means moonlight shining on water.

9. Vybafnout (Czech)

A word tailor-made for annoying older brothers—it means to jump out and say boo.

10. M... (Turkish)

10. Mencolek (Indonesian)

You know that old trick where you tap someone lightly on the opposite shoulder from behind to fool them? The Indonesians have a word for it.

11. Faamiti (Samoan)

To make a squeaking sound by sucking air past the lips in order to gain the attention of a dog or child.

12. Glas wen (Welsh)

A smile that is insincere or mocking. Literally, a blue smile.

13. Bakku-shan (Japanese)

The experience of seeing a woman who appears pretty from behind but not from the front.

14. Boketto (Japanese)

It's nice to know that the Japanese think enough of the act of gazing vacantly into the distance without thinking to give it a name.

15. Kummerspeck (German)

Excess weight gained from emotional overeating. Literally, grief bacon.

Many of the words above can be found in BBC researcher Adam Jacot de Boinod's book ['The Meaning of Tingo and Other Extraordinary Words from Around the World.'](#)

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6. Untucked?

posted by **Matt** on [7-23-2011 at 12:03 am](#)

My favorite is the Indonesian word jayus, which means a joke so unfunny and told so poorly that you just have to laugh.

posted by **Sam** on [7-23-2011 at 12:05 am](#)

The chinese word guanxi is very difficult to translate to English. Similar to relations, work politics, or your social/professional network, guanxi is who you know, not what you know. This word is usually described as a quantifiable thing, the more guanxi you have, the more success you have, and at any new job you have to learn the guanxi to be successful.

posted by **Ben** on [7-23-2011 at 12:09 am](#)

Second vote for "doch" being a great (and functional) foreign word. After a year in Germany I wanted to use t in English conversations...

posted by **Emmett** on [7-23-2011 at 12:21 am](#)

But we do have an English equivalent to bakku-shan. It's butterface, sometimes hyphenated as butter-face.

As in, "nice body, butterface... (but her face...)"

posted by **Jane** on [7-23-2011 at 1:07 am](#)

I call yuputka “the creepy crawlies.”

posted by **Daniel** on [7-23-2011 at 1:38 am](#)

For the #14 – staring off into space without thinking, my family always uses “petit mal”. The term is for a small seizure, I think, which may be a little dramatic for this case. But it comes up a lot in conversation, surprisingly.

posted by **Amanda** on [7-23-2011 at 1:42 am](#)

Schradenfruede. German for happiness at the misfortune of others.

posted by **JLBOB** on [7-23-2011 at 1:54 am](#)

“strapatti” (sp?) in English means “my hair is messed up.” If you saw me, you’d understand!

posted by **Robyn** on [7-23-2011 at 4:10 am](#)

Stephen Fry cites a Hungarian word in his novel The Liar: “puszipajtás”, which he says means “someone you know well enough to kiss in the street”. The Liar is, of course, a work of fiction, and so this could be a made-up word. But I really hope it isn’t.

posted by **Alkmene** on [7-23-2011 at 6:26 am](#)

An even better example from Welsh is ‘hiraeth’ (pronounced he-rye-th). It means a longing for Wales, or home, for those who are in other pastures, or even a longing for the better days of the past.

posted by **Nathan** on [7-23-2011 at 6:52 am](#)

@JLBOB Happiness at the misfortune of others? That is German!

posted by **Angela** on [7-23-2011 at 7:24 am](#)

in hebrew there is a word for congratulating a person for getting a new item – “tithadesh”

posted by **keren** on [7-23-2011 at 7:44 am](#)

Someone already brought up butterface...i also want to include crocodile smile as the english form of glas wen

posted by **Cinsavant** on [7-23-2011 at 8:33 am](#)

Hello,
for the point n. 3, the correct word is 'LAMPADATO'...

Enjoy!!!

Brigida.

posted by **Brigida** on [7-23-2011 at 8:42 am](#)

I have seen #11 in action in a philipino family I know.

its a very distinct sound and what I found interesting is..

in a group of several sets of parents and at least a dozen kids... each kid knew the sound of his/her parents "faamiti" So you could tell whose kids were whose by which ones stopped cold when they heard their parents "sound" which they used as a warning or

we americans may say "Cut it out- NOW!" all they have to do is make that sound and got an instant reaction!!!

It was pretty cool!

posted by **Kate** on [7-23-2011 at 9:14 am](#)

After moving to Denmark, I've come across many situations where there just isn't an English word to cover what the Danish means.

'Hygge', is the most well known. It covers all sorts of nice atmospheres, but also feeling good, or hoping someone else has a good time. Something or an experience can be 'hyggeligt', you can say 'kan du/I hygge jer' (have a really nice time)...Comfy comes close.

The Danes' 'doch', affirmative reply to a negative question, would be 'jo', said with some extra emphasis than just yes.

Don't forget too, that Danish has a word for the back of the knee...'hase'.

posted by **Steve** on [7-23-2011 at 9:19 am](#)

I've heard #3 called "tanorexia" by different news agencies. It's a little sad that there was a word needed.

How about a word for people who are addicted to trends and fads to the point of doing physical damage to themselves. Something more specific than "idiot".

posted by **Rixie** on [7-23-2011 at 9:25 am](#)

"Doch" is one of my favorites – I spent a semester in Germany in college, and it took us

forever to really understand the appropriate usage. May have to start using it again....thanks for the reminder, Michael!

posted by **Lynley** on [7-23-2011 at 9:44 am](#)

#8 has a Japanese equivalent (Suigetsu) – it was the name of my old jujitsu dojo. Still no English version though.

posted by **Sara** on [7-23-2011 at 9:49 am](#)

The glow from tanning salons is UV, not IR, light...

[Note: Good call. Thanks!]

posted by **Jorge** on [7-23-2011 at 9:53 am](#)

Isn't Luftmensch GERMAN?

posted by **Jorge** on [7-23-2011 at 9:54 am](#)

"8. Gumusservi (Turkish)

Meteorologists can be poets in Turkey with words like this at their disposal. It means moonlight shining on water."

We do actually have an English word for that...moonglade. It's not a very well known word, but it's in the dictionary.

posted by **Adam** on [7-23-2011 at 10:08 am](#)

#12 Glas wen – Isn't "smirk" the same, an insincere or mocking smile?

@Kate

We call it "sut-sot". It's onomatopoeic.

posted by **Dan** on [7-23-2011 at 10:41 am](#)

@Jorge

Yes. Yiddish is a German dialect with Hebrew loanwords and it is used by many Jewish people in Germanic areas (and their descendants in the US). I assume the nuance of the word luftmensch is not readily known by non-Jewish speakers of German.

posted by **Dan** on [7-23-2011 at 10:48 am](#)

"Consuegra" is my grandson's other grandmother. Mi consuegra and I are good friends,

which might not happen if she were American born.

posted by **cathysfiddle** on [7-23-2011 at 11:38 am](#)

Isn't "11. Faamiti (Samoan)

To make a squeaking sound by sucking air past the lips in order to gain the attention of a dog or child." the same as "whistle"?

posted by **Celeste** on [7-23-2011 at 11:54 am](#)

My mother in law keeps screaming "Capara" (Im pretty sure its Hebrew, could be Arabic slang)

It means spitting in a soup to save your soul from illness. (I think thats how she described it) You say it to people you love.

posted by **Diane** on [7-23-2011 at 12:05 pm](#)

The Yaghen language of Tierra del Fuego (of which there is now only one native speaker) has a word "mamihlapinatapai" that has been translated as "a look shared by two people, each wishing tha the other will offer something that they both desire but are unwilling to do." It once appeared in Guinness as the "most succinct word."

posted by **Stefan** on [7-23-2011 at 2:49 pm](#)

*that

This phone's copy/paste function is a little lacking sometimes.

posted by **Stefan** on [7-23-2011 at 2:51 pm](#)

JLBOB, it's spelled "Schadenfreude"

For native English speakers, it's pronounced "sha den froy duh"

posted by **karina.** on [7-23-2011 at 3:27 pm](#)

Wabi sabi: the art of finding beauty in imperfection and profundity in nature

+1 for Schadenfreude

posted by **IIIogical42** on [7-23-2011 at 3:53 pm](#)

14. Boketto (Japanese):

Is this not the same as the english "spacing out"?

posted by [Carrie](#) on [7-23-2011 at 3:59 pm](#)

Would be nice if you would put the phonetic spellings with the “15 Wonderful Words..” so I could pronounce them !

posted by [Ginny](#) on [7-23-2011 at 4:20 pm](#)

For #13, there is always the American slang “Butterface.”

posted by [Max Radcliffe](#) on [7-23-2011 at 5:21 pm](#)

I’ve always liked the Swedish word “lagom,” which means something like “just the right amount—not too little and not too much.” It’s a concept we could use more of in the US.

posted by [Leslie](#) on [7-23-2011 at 5:44 pm](#)

There is a Portuguese word for the feeling of longing: “saudade”. You can feel saudade or saudades for a person, place, sensation or object that is distant or apart from you. People often say that saudade is “the love that remains”. In Brazilian Portuguese (and in some African languages and dialects too, I guess) there is also the word “banzo” to describe the “saudade negra” (black longing) – the extreme feeling of apathy enslaved black people felt because of a saudade from their land. Many of them actually died from this.

posted by [João](#) on [7-23-2011 at 6:45 pm](#)

Technically speaking, “formication,” as an English word, seems to have the same basic definition as “yuputka.”

posted by [Conor](#) on [7-23-2011 at 7:52 pm](#)

I like “steppenwitz,” which I saw on a Snopes article. It’s the word for when you come up with the perfect comeback too late (i.e. when you’re going down the stairs—thus, “step”).

posted by [Sillstaw](#) on [7-23-2011 at 9:57 pm](#)

@Sillstaw

The French call it “l’esprit de l’escalier.”

posted by [chris](#) on [7-23-2011 at 11:14 pm](#)

Awesome article! And, I can always count on the comments section to offer even more!
(Although, I would think that Faamiti, at #11, would be “chirrup”, wouldn’t it?)

posted by **Araxie** on [7-24-2011 at 1:18 am](#)

Umm...You do know that there is no such thing as “Yiddish” people, right? Yiddish is a predominately Jewish language, and a mix of Hebrew and other languages. You might want to check your facts before you publish an article like this. Yiddish is a language. Yiddish people do not exist.

posted by **Cait** on [7-24-2011 at 1:56 am](#)

Don’t forget “schadenfreude”. It’s German and means roughly “pleasure at another’s pain”.

posted by **Baarbear** on [7-24-2011 at 2:06 am](#)

Cathysfiddle-

“Consuegra” (literally: Con=with + suegra=mother in law) is actually the word for fellow mother in law, a grandchild need not be part of it at all. “Consuegro” goes for fellow father in law. To have one of these all you need to do is have a child that gets married to someone, and the parents of your new child-in-law become your “consuegros”.

I also like “Tocayo” or “Tocaya”. It is also a Spanish worn, meaning “someone who shares the same name”, usually just the first. (though unlike “namesake” this person needn’t be named after the other). It is pretty cool in Mexican culture to have met one of these, and i know one instance in which this may have played a part in saving the life of someone i know.

posted by **Encarnacion** on [7-24-2011 at 4:34 am](#)

“Davka”, from Hebrew. The closest English equivalent would be “specifically”, but it’s got so many more nuances.

posted by **MetFanMac** on [7-24-2011 at 5:07 am](#)

Yiddish is absolutely full of wonderful descriptive words. “Chutzpah” is one commonly translated as “Nervy” but in actuality it is much richer – combination of nerve, arrogance, guts.

One of the best is the difference between the words “Schlemiel” and “Schlemazel” (loosely translated as “Dumbklutz” and “Hard luck Loser”.

Best definition: A “Schlemiel” is someone who spills soup on someone in a restaurant – a

“Schlemazel” is the guy he spills it on. Maybe they are not all 100% unique to yiddish, but the traditional usage and appropriateness of pronunciation (don't they just “sound” like the the concepts they represent) – make them unique.

posted by **Bob** on [7-24-2011 at 7:05 am](#)

Faamiti is a squeaking noise produced by sucking air through puckered lips.

The Filipino sound people have mentioned here is more of a hissing/sibilant sound made by blowing air through our teeth.

posted by **KD** on [7-24-2011 at 7:33 am](#)

In Assamese, a language spoken mostly in North-East India, the word “majdangour” literally means “round around the middle.”

A much more apt word than the English nondescript “fat” for many Indian men with rice bellies... =)

posted by **Jacqui** on [7-24-2011 at 7:53 am](#)

Yep, formication covers #2. The feeling of bugs crawling on your skin.

posted by **Connie** on [7-24-2011 at 10:14 am](#)

L'esprit de l'escalier has an English equivalent: “doorstep wit”.

posted by **Peter** on [7-24-2011 at 1:27 pm](#)

What most people overlook is “tsunami.” A Japanese word that most think translates to tidal wave. However, tsunami are not tidal nor are they waves.

posted by **Aragorn** on [7-24-2011 at 2:36 pm](#)

Here's another German word that has no real equivalent: Fremdschämen – v. To be embarrassed on behalf of someone else who behaves utterly ridiculously and doesn't seem to notice/care.

posted by **Julika** on [7-24-2011 at 5:17 pm](#)

Backpfeifengesicht – German for a face badly in need of a fist

posted by **Dean** on [7-24-2011 at 8:32 pm](#)

Some enjoyable words here, but the Global Language Monitor is not a reliable source: its estimate of the size of English vocabulary is patently daft.

posted by **Stan** on [7-25-2011 at 5:04 am](#)

The dutch word 'gezellig' which is used when people are having a good time together. You can also use this word in for example a house, in this context the translation is cosy.

posted by **Roos** on [7-25-2011 at 10:58 am](#)

There is a close equivalent English word for "guanxi" – it's "clout."

posted by **Therese Z** on [7-25-2011 at 11:21 am](#)

One of my favorite German words is Ohrwurm, literally meaning "ear worm," a song that gets stuck in your head and won't leave. I've actually seen that one pop up in English recently, though, so maybe it's not so exclusive anymore.

posted by **Fruppi** on [7-25-2011 at 1:48 pm](#)

Thank you, Conor! I immediately thought of "formication" when I read that description.

posted by **SarahMarie** on [7-25-2011 at 2:22 pm](#)

Is 'luftmensch' really Yiddish? Knowing next to no German, I figured it out without reading the definition.

posted by **regeya** on [7-25-2011 at 3:53 pm](#)

12. smirk – to smile in an affected, smug, or offensively familiar way.

posted by **Hinano** on [7-25-2011 at 7:14 pm](#)

@Bob, you left out the best part – the nudnik. As in...

A "Schlemiel" is someone who spills soup on someone in a restaurant – a "Schlemazel" is the guy he spills it on. A "Nudnik" asks what type of soup it was.

kvell: to burst with pride, usually in others

posted by **LKS** on [7-25-2011 at 8:12 pm](#)

Agita. I have no idea what dialect it is (my Irish mother uses it but I don't think it's Gaelic) but I sure got yelled at a lot for giving it to my mother when I was younger!

posted by **Meghan** on [7-26-2011 at 6:52 pm](#)

I'm a little late to this party, but the French have "chez," which means "at the home of." Where are we playing bridge tonight? Chez Bob.

posted by **Joan** on [7-26-2011 at 7:11 pm](#)

You can't forget the Norwegian Uff Da. It is a perfectly polite expression which may be used in place of various vulgarisms employed to evince displeasure. But the only translation it has is that da is then. It is just a polite curse when things happen.

posted by **Dave F** on [7-29-2011 at 7:14 pm](#)

Zugzwang!

posted by **orion** on [7-30-2011 at 4:03 pm](#)

Luftmensch translates very nicely to airhead.

posted by **Bob** on [7-30-2011 at 4:09 pm](#)

How about the German, "sitz·fleisch"/sits·flīSH/Noun
Power to endure or to persevere in an activity; staying power.

posted by **Leo Groner** on [7-30-2011 at 4:15 pm](#)

The translation given for the German Kumperspeck is silly. The basic meaning of "Speck" is fatty tissue. While this can also mean bacon, a more sensible literal translation would be "grief fat".

Anyway, people who are interested in this topic might have a look at Howard Rheingold's book They Have a Word for It.

posted by **David Steinsaltz** on [7-30-2011 at 4:19 pm](#)

How about:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisu>

Sisu is a Finnish term loosely translated into English as strength of will, determination,

perseverance, and acting rationally in the face of adversity. However, the word is widely considered to lack a proper translation into any language. Sisu has been described as being integral to understanding Finnish culture. The literal meaning is equivalent in English to “having guts”, and the word derives from sisus, which means something inner or interior. However sisu is defined by a long-term element in it; it is not momentary courage, but the ability to sustain an action against the odds. Deciding on a course of action and then sticking to that decision against repeated failures is sisu. It is similar to equanimity, except the forbearance of sisu has a grimmer quality of stress management than the latter. The noun sisu is related to the adjective sisukas, one having the quality of sisu.

posted by **Matt** on [7-30-2011 at 5:57 pm](#)

Quand même is one of my favorites in French! It’s a stand-in for “anyway,” “seriously?!” “whatever,” “wow,” and about a thousand other English interjections and space-fillers. When I got the hang of that during a summer in West Africa, I really felt like I had a grasp on French.

posted by **Ben** on [7-30-2011 at 6:37 pm](#)

Luftmensch doesn’t really belong in this list, since it appears in any standard English dictionary. (see m-w.com, e.g.)

This is why ‘schadenfreude’ isn’t included.

posted by **Carbon Dated** on [7-30-2011 at 7:54 pm](#)

The Hebrew equivalent of “guanxi” is “protexia.”

posted by **Dan** on [7-30-2011 at 9:31 pm](#)

My Indonesian girlfriend Said # 10 just means “tap.” One of the best words ever though is Indonesian with no English match.

Gumas (goo-mahs). It means when you feel an incredible swell of love and affection for someone. In English it’d be like, ooh I just want to pinch your face or ooh I just wanna eat you up :)

posted by **Mikia** on [7-31-2011 at 1:09 am](#)

Dave – “uff da” is part of the Minnesotan vocabulary, not sure if that makes it part of English...

I’ve read that the English language has about 100-200 thousand words in current usage, but the average speaker knows less than 40 thousand. Still the largest vocabulary of any language, simply because we’ve borrowed from so many other languages.

posted by **nerfer** on [7-31-2011 at 1:18 am](#)

There is also the opposite of Schade freude, Glückschmerz, which is pain at another's good fortune.

posted by **vhh** on [7-31-2011 at 1:34 am](#)

Dave, I heard some of Rose Nylund's hometown folks use "Uff-da!" when they came from Minnesota to visit on an episode of "The Golden Girls."

She had just won St. Olaf's Woman-of-the-Year Award, and that's the phrase they used to cheer her. I wasn't aware that it was a substitute for a curse, though.

posted by **Sandy Wood** on [7-31-2011 at 3:28 am](#)

Mencorek is more commonly used in Indonesian to mean "pinch" rather than "tap someone on the other shoulder to trick them." One of my fav Indonesian words without a direct English equivalent is "Gurih" – it means deliciously salty and oily (like potato chips – or any kind of deep fried goodness!) But in any language there are lots of words that we kind of approximate rather than having a direct equivalent. (another eg from Indonesian: "Kenalkan" -which is kind of like "let me introduce...") Love the range of words that are coming up!

posted by **danielle** on [7-31-2011 at 4:57 am](#)

3. Slampadato (Italian)

Addicted to the UV glow of tanning salons? This word describes you.

Did anybody else think about Jersey Shore?

posted by **Doug** on [7-31-2011 at 9:26 am](#)

doch, as has been noted, rebuts a negative, sometimes as simply as "Nein!" Doch!"

in this case the english equivalent is "way", as in

"No Way"

"Way!"

posted by **benjoya** on [7-31-2011 at 5:37 pm](#)

"Fernweh" in German is the literal opposite of homesickness. It's like HERE-sickness, or a strong impulse to no longer be wherever you are.

posted by **Eo** on [7-31-2011 at 5:56 pm](#)

Menfolk. : use tip finger to make little scoop On someone

posted by **Mikia** on [7-31-2011 at 10:25 pm](#)

For (2) try formication (though, technically, it refers to ants)

posted by **Korhomme** on [8-1-2011 at 11:17 am](#)

and cute as in 'cute hoor' which doesn't mean what you think it does (Irish english)

posted by **Korhomme** on [8-1-2011 at 11:21 am](#)

Um...the thing I find strange about the Japanese word "bakku-shan" being on this list is that it is a compound word made out of two non-Japanese words. "Bakku" is the Japanification of the English word "back" and "shan" is the Japanification of the German word "schön."

It just seems like saying "There is no equivalent in any other language to the English word 'Chicken-Teriyaki.'"

posted by **Nic** on [8-1-2011 at 11:37 am](#)

nerfer, it might be part of the Minnesotan vocabulary now, but that is because America is the melting pot of the world. My grandma was Norwegian and taught me that when I was a kid. And anyone who lives in southern California who has gone to Solvang has seen a lot of Uff Da merchandise.

posted by **Dave F** on [8-1-2011 at 2:56 pm](#)

I am with Leslie, the Swedish "lagom" (laa-gom) is a wonderful word that really has no english counterpart. Another Swedish word that has no direct single word translation to english is "fika" (fe-kuh) which literally means a social coffee break. This is also probably the word most favorited by those of us living in Sweden, and also could explain why Sweden is Lagom.

posted by **ckn** on [8-1-2011 at 5:02 pm](#)

These were fun!

But if someone hasn't poked you yet, "glas wen" would be _white_ smile, not blue smile.

Gwen/wen means “white” in Welsh.

posted by **Karen** on [8-1-2011 at 11:38 pm](#)

Déja vu.

posted by **Christopher** on [8-2-2011 at 10:12 am](#)

11. Faamiti (Samoan)

To make a squeaking sound by sucking air past the lips in order to gain the attention of a dog or child.

In ‘Birder’s English’ it’s called “pishing”.

posted by **Pauline Guillermo** on [8-4-2011 at 9:32 pm](#)

Czech has some great words – my favorite being “tratoliště”, which means “pool of blood/gore”.

Ref the above-mentioned “vybafnout”, just as a etymological note: “baf!” is the Czech version of “boo!”!

posted by **Jennifer Hejtmankova** on [8-8-2011 at 11:19 am](#)

we do have an equivalent for #13: butterface. it’s slang, not nice and based on 3 individual words(“but her face”, as in, “i thought everything was hot about her, until i saw she was a butterface.”)

posted by **ellen** on [8-11-2011 at 12:30 am](#)

Hey I’m from Iowa and use uffda a lot but when I moved to Missouri for a breif spell they had no idea what I was talking about.

posted by **Nikki** on [8-31-2011 at 4:25 pm](#)

Also i always use “Gesundheit” (the German word for “health”) after someone sneezes since I’m not overly churchy to say “bless you”

posted by **Nikki** on [8-31-2011 at 4:42 pm](#)

My favorite to use is “nyanga.” It’s a Kamtok word (from Cameroon) and basically refers to anything added to make something more attractive or prettier such as frills, bling... “You’ve added a lot of nyanga to your car,” or “your shirt has too much nyanga on it.”

posted by **K-eM** on [9-1-2011 at 12:07 pm](#)

So many good ones! I'm a big fan of the German "muskelkater," which if I haven't completely misremembered/misinterpreted means literally "muscle hangover," for that muscle ache you get the day after doing some hard physical labor or working out.

posted by **rararangaro** on [9-1-2011 at 5:31 pm](#)

For those citing schadenfreude that has been adopted into English so is considered an English word derived from German in the tradition of words like debris and adobe.

posted by **Steve from Los Angeles** on [9-1-2011 at 10:50 pm](#)

Afrikaans: "Boudvlos"

English: G-string (butt floss)

posted by **Francois Botha** on [9-3-2011 at 4:59 am](#)

I love "sitzpinkler." In German, it is a person who sits to pee, also means a wussy-boy. When I was potty-training my son (to be a sitter, not a pointer), I used that word, before I realize I was also insulting him.

posted by **Russ** on [9-5-2011 at 9:49 pm](#)

"Bakku-shan" has a slang equivalent, "butterface". As in, "She had a nice body.... But, her face!"

posted by **RaZZo** on [9-7-2011 at 5:32 pm](#)

And no mention of the Portuguese "Saudades": used to describe that feeling of a joyful mourning.

posted by **Sergio** on [9-8-2011 at 4:19 am](#)

Zhaghzhagh (Persian)

posted by **Sarah** on [9-8-2011 at 7:27 am](#)

Yuputka (Ulwa) – the English term is fornication

Slampadato (Italian) – the English neologism is tanorexia

Zhaghzhagh (Persian) – the English term is odonterism

Though not a direct equivalent, “woolgathering” covers Boketto (Japanese) (though woolgathering suggests daydreaming).

posted by **Sarah** on [9-8-2011 at 7:28 am](#)

@sillstaw: “Steppenwitz” should be “Treppenwitz”, I believe. (come to think of it, “Treppenwolf” would be kind of a fun name for a rock band)

Along the same lines as “doch”, German also has “selbstverstaendlich”, which translates as “selfexplanatory” or “speaks for itself” but in usage sort of equates to “naturally” or “of course”.

The German word I find I miss most often is “beziehungsweise”, sort of a logical switch (useful enough to have its own abbreviation, “bzw.”). Usage is “A bzw. B”, meaning “A or B, depending on the circumstances”, or “as the case may be”.

posted by **Chris** on [9-9-2011 at 8:23 am](#)

I thought saudade meant what the English word “melancholy” means.

posted by **Paula** on [9-12-2011 at 2:31 pm](#)

@Matt

Just a quick response in support of the initial claim of the article.

For #1, you suggest that “chattering” is essentially the same as Zhaghzhagh, especially given the context of cold (rather than a descriptive of someone talking a lot or a sound an animal might make). Aside from the fact that the definition apparently includes the possibility of rage, I’d give you this one, except to say that with “chattering,” I think you’d still be expected to qualify that the teeth are chattering, while Zhaghzhagh includes this as part of its definition.

For #2, you suggest Heebie-jeebies. I would argue that the heebie-jeebies is the effect-reaction of experiencing Yuputka, therefore not a substitute.

For #4, you suggest Space Cadet. I’d argue that this typically refers to someone who is forgetful or tends to daydream or fail to listen, while Luftmensch seems to imply more of an idealist-artsy kind of “dreamer” rather than a number-cruncher type.

And for #6, when you suggest Untucked, you are describing the state of the shirt. Cotisuelto refers to the person who wears such a style.

I don’t mean to be nit-picky, as some of your suggestions would generally be understood and acceptable, but I do think that they still are not as meaningfully accurate as the words listed. Rather, the English language tends to need broader descriptions or full sentences to really encompass the meaning of these individual words. Which is the whole point that the

article is making.

posted by **grace** on [9-15-2011 at 1:10 am](#)

“Consuegra” has a Bulgarian equivalent – “svatya” (female) or “svat” (male). “Svatosvane” (v) is the process of negotiating a marriage for one’s adult child using a matchmaker (not quite an arranged marriage, more to do with negotiating the dowry and such practicalities.) A shared grandchild is not part of the word’s meaning.

There are also 4 different words for “aunt” and 4 for “uncle”. “chicho” is your father’s brother, “vuicho” is your mother’s brother, “strinko” is your father’s sister’s husband, and “svako” is your mother’s sister’s husband. “Etarva” is your husband’s brother’s wife, not to be confused with “snaha” (brother’s wife) or “zalva” (husband’s sister), all of which translate to “sister-in-law”. Your mother-in-law is “svekarva” if you are female but “tushta” if you are male. (I believe Russian terms are similar.) And on and on... this comes from large farmer households with multiple generations living under one roof. Fascinating stuff to someone from my generation who barely sees all those extended family members.

posted by **wordnerd** on [9-23-2011 at 8:06 pm](#)

My Chilean friend tells me that the Spanish language has a specific name for various shades of color that we lump all together.

posted by **Runa Schlafter** on [9-27-2011 at 7:52 am](#)

I like the Swedish word orka, as in Jag orkar inte. I don’t have the energy or I just plain don’t feel like it. As good excuse as any to avoid household chores.

posted by **Corinda** on [10-1-2011 at 11:54 pm](#)

in Filipino, we have the word “torpe.” I don’t know of an English word that can best translate it but basically, torpe is a word used to describe a guy who gets butterflies in his stomach, becomes speechless and just can’t approach a girl he likes.

We also have “kilig” or the feeling of having butterflies in your stomach because of a romantic gesture someone made for you or for somebody you know. Kilig is almost always used in the context of love or romantic relationships.

posted by **crazeeeeh** on [10-3-2011 at 11:13 am](#)

“Luftmensch” is just straight German, not Yiddish

posted by **Will** on [10-6-2011 at 2:08 am](#)

I'm Italian and "Slampadato" is not used in Italy. May be "allampadato" o "lampadato".
"slampadato" does not exist

posted by **Giulio** on [10-7-2011 at 10:26 am](#)

Two other German words:

- 1) Rosinenpicker: (raisin picker) someone who only takes the best but not the rest, i.e., eats the raisins from the bread but not the crust.
- 2) Korinthenkacker: korinthe is some sort of raisin, kacker means to take a dump. Someone who is absolutely picky with respect to details in a way that creates a lot of work for you without noticable benefit for anyone. Swearword often used for people in public service (but not so much anymore, Germany has changed a lot in that respect).

Make sure not to mix the two up :-)

posted by **Nina** on [10-8-2011 at 11:15 am](#)

@Will

yes it is a German word but we would not use it meaningfully As someone else already said: Yiddish contains a lot of German words and words with German root (like Luftmensch), but possibly different meaning. We would use "Tagträumer" (day dreamer) or "Luftikus" for the same kind of person.

posted by **Nina** on [10-8-2011 at 11:18 am](#)

@vhh, no absolutely no Glücksschmerz in Germany... There are some English/American websites reporting on it, but we do not have that. Simple 'envy' is all there is (beneiden/Neid).

posted by **Nina** on [10-8-2011 at 11:27 am](#)



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