#

# ДИПЛОМНА РОБОТА

# Лексичні та синтактико-стилістичні

# зміни в сучасній англійській мові:

# вплив комп’ютерних технологій

# Ministry of Education in Ukraine

# Department of English Lexicology and Stylistics

# Diploma Paper

# Lexical and Syntactic-Stylistic Changes

# in Modern English Language:

# Computerization, Impact

# Scientific advisor

# Table of contents

# Introduction…………………………………………………………………...3

**Part I**

1. **Neologisms as a Linguistic Phenomenon**
2. **Vocabulary Extension**
3. **Semantic Extension**
4. **Stylistic Classification of the English Word-Stock**

 **1.2.1.The Notion of Slang, Jargon, and Techspeak.**

 **1.2.2.Hackerdom**

 **1.2.3.Hacker subcultures**

**Part II**

**2.1. Jargon Construction**

**2.1.1. Verb Doubling**

**2.1.2. Soundalike Slang**

**2.1.3. The «P» convention**

**2.1.4. Generalization**

**2.1.5. Spoken Inarticulations**

**2.1.6. Anthropomorphization**

**2.1.7. Comparatives**

**2.2. Hacker Style as**

**2.2.1. Hacker Speech Style………………………………...**

**2.2.2. Hacker Writing Style……………………………………….**

**2.2.3. International Style……………………..…………………….**

**2.2.6. Hacker Humour**

**2.3. Pronunciation Features of Hacker Jargon**

# Conclusions……………………………………………………………….55

# Bibliography…………………………………………………………….. 56

# List of Lexicographical Sourses

# List of Internet Sites

# Glossary of Terms……………………………………………………….55

# Appendix………………………………………………………………….57

# INTRODUCTION

#  This paper deals with computerization as a source of lexical, syntactic-stylistic, and phonetic changes in Modern English language. It focuses on hacker’s jargon having its construction, stylistic peculiarities, and phonetic features as the target.

#  *The scientific novelty* of the paper lies in the attempt to systemize lexical, syntactic-stylistic, and phonetic changes, which are introduced by hacker culture to Modern English; to find out and describe particular features of hacker jargon; to analyse the correlation between basic hacker subcultures. A few hackers tried to analyze the language they use; the problem of hacker’s jargon is still a moot point.

#  *The theoretical value* of the research lies in the fact that it is one of the first attempts to investigate the changes introduced to Modern English with the appearance of computers. We hope that the obtained data will make a contribution to the linguistic studies, especially to the pragmatic aspects of linguistics.

#  *The practical value* of the work is in the opportunity to apply the data to the process of teaching English at university: to teach conversational English at practical English classes, at lectures on English Lexicology or Stylistics.

#  *The objective of the paper* is to reveal and describe a set of lexicological, stylistic, and phonetic features of hacker jargon.

#  In accordance with the objective the following *tasks* are set:

# 1) to define the status of hacker jargon as a linguistic and sociocultural phenomenon;

# 2) to single out and analyze the most significant ways of forming hacker jargon;

# 3) to analyze the style hackers use in written and oral speech;

# 4) to provide pronunciation keys to the jargon.

# The investigation was carried out on the material of Internet. 25 sites in total introducing the peculiarities of hacker jargon were analyzed through the use of diachronic, synchronic, descriptive approaches, through some elements of distributional, substitution, and oppositional methods of linguistic analysis and with some elements of conceptual, linguostylistic, and sociocultural analyses included.

#  *The structure of the work* is donein accordance with the general conceptual framework adopted. Part I of the paper dwells upon neologisms as a linguistic phenomenon, stylistic differentiation of Modern English vocabulary, the difference between slang, jargon, and techspeak, and hacker culture as a loosely networked collection of subcultures. Part II presents tentative applications of basic approaches to hacker jargon analysis in terms of linguistics, semantics, stylistics, and phonetics. Conclusions contain the description of the major results of the research.

# PART I

# 1.1. Neologisms as a Linguistic Phenomenon

# No living language remains stable; its vocabulary is constantly growing and changing. Some words drop out of the vocabulary of a language with changes in the social system, with the growth and development of culture and technology.

#  The object of our interest and investigation is neologisms. Many linguists have researched this phenomenon.

#  «Neologisms is a linguistic term which refers to any newly coined word, word combination, a new meaning for an existing word, or a word borrowed from another language, the novelty of which is still felt»

# (Arnold : 217)

#  Lexicographers consider neologisms words that appeared in the language not later a certain time. Some researchers put this boundary to be after the end of World War II (Миклашевская : 12); some linguists think that neologisms are words invented after 1957 – the year of the first satellite aprobation and of space. (Заботкина В.И. : 16)

#  New lexical units may be coined through « vocabulary extension and semantic extension.

#  Vocabulary extension is the appearance of new lexical items which usually appear as the result of

# · productive (patterned) ways of word-formation;

# · non-productive (non-patterned) ways of word-formation;

# · borrowing from other languages.

# Semantic extension is the appearance of new lexical meanings of existing words.

# (Ginsburg : 184)

# 1.1.1. Vocabulary Extension

# Neologisms are usually coined out of elements, which already exist in Modern English. Deliberate coinage is mostly the product of one’s creativity, ingenuity, and imitation. One should distinguish between patterned and non-patterned ways of word-formation.

# The most widely used patterned means are:

# affixation (suffixation and prefixation);

# conversion;

# composition

# Neologisms coined by these means are made up of elements already available in the language. The novelty of them lies in the particular combination of these elements.

# The *affixes* that are thought to be the most productive are: -ness, -er, mini-, over-:

# e.g.: a roomer, well-to-do-ness, thingness, oneness etc.

# The most productive patterns of forming new nouns are:

# Verb + -er ,

# e.g.: brain-washer, double-talker;

# Verb + -ing,

# e.g.: cracking, phreaking.

# The most frequent ways of verb coinage are:

# un- + verb,

# e.g.: unhook, undo, unbreak;

# (adjective/noun + noun) + -ed, e.g.: long-legged, flat-bottomed

#  The most widely used ways of forming new adjectives are:

# verb + -able,

# e.g.: attachable, livable-in;

# un- + Participle I or II,

# e.g.: unguarded, unheard-of;

# un- + adverb,

# e.g.: unsouled, uncool.

#         Conversion, or zero- inflection, is a special non-affixal type of transforming a word into another part of speech.»

# (Marchand : 293)

#  The most frequently used patterns of conversion are:

# *Noun - verb*

# E.g.: a butcher – to butcher, a boss – to boss

# *Verb - noun*

# E.g.: to know how – the know-how, to catch – the catch

# *Adjective – noun*

# E.g.: intellectual – the intellectual, progressive – the progressive

# *Noun – adjective*

# E.g.: a maiden – maiden, a sidelong - sidelong

#  *Composition* of words is compounding a word of smaller words.

# E.g.: fish-in, laugh-in etc.

#  The second component of compound nouns often becomes centers of inventions by analogy. For instance, the component *sick* in *seasick and homesick* led to invention of *space-sick, airsick, carsick etc. Quake* in *earthquake* led to *birthquake* (population explosion); *scraper* in *skyscraper* led to *thighscraper* (mini-scirt).

#  New words may be coined in a non-patterned way. There are two types of non-patterned way of word creation:

#  Lexicalization as a transformation of a word-form

#  Shortening which consists in substituting a part for a whole. It involves 1. transformation of a word-group into a word and 2. a change of the word-structure resulting in a new lexical item.

# Due to various semantic and syntactic reasons a form that originally expressed grammatical meaning, for example, the plural of nouns, becomes a basis for a new lexical meaning. This process is called *lexicalization*.

# E.g.: the nouns *arms, customs* lost their grammatical meaning and became isolated from the paradigm of the words *arm, custom,* and develop a different lexical meaning of «weapons and «import duties».

#  Occasional lexicalization of phrases is an effective linguistic device used for stylistic purposes.

# E.g.: a happy-go-lucky man; these how-do-you-do’s are annoying etc.

#  *Shortening* results in new lexical items proper only in written speech.

# E.g.: RD for road, St for street, Apt for apartment etc.

#  However, «in the process of language development many of the graphical abbreviations penetrate into the sphere of oral intercourse, for instance, a.m., p.m., SOS, etc.

#  Transformation of word-groups into words involve different types of lexical shortening:

#  Ellipsis or substantivasation;

#  Initial letter or syllable abbreviations (achronyms);

#  Blendings.

# *Substantivisation* consists in dropping the final nominal member of a frequently used attributive word-group.

# E.g.: *the finals* from *the final examinations*; *a documentary* from a *documentary film*.

# *Acronyms* and letter abbreviations are lexical abbreviations of a phrase. They are regular vocabulary units spoken as words.

# E.g.: BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation; radar – radio detection and ranging; V-day – Victory Day.

# *Blendings* are the result of conscious creation of words by merging irregular fragments of several words.

# E.g.: *brunch* from *breakfast and lunch*; *radiotrician* from *radio and electrician*; *mike* from *microplane.*

#  *Borrowings* are neologisms borrowed from foreign languages. «The distinction should be made between:

#  Direct adoption of foreign words. Loan-words of this type can undergo different degrees of accommodation or remain unadopted;

#  Making new words by derivation or composition, including elements of different origin;

#  New derivatives or new compounds created by translation of the lexical unit into another languafe.

# A lexical unit created by loan-translation is called a calque.»

# (Rayevska : 248)

# The last decades of the 20-th century characterized by an intensive development of various sciences, technique, culture, and political life, has brought to Modern English a lot of new formations.

# 1.1.2. Semantic Extention

# Semantic extention is the appearance of new meanings of already existing words in the given language. This process is caused by the following reasons:

#  Changes in social life of a community;

#  Changes of objects the names of which are retained;

#  Terminological use of words by people of various professional groups, where words modify their meaning acquiring a new sense;

#  Adaptation to special purposes

# Many scholars have researched change of word meaning. There are various logical and psychological classifications of its types. Traditional classification is the following:

# 1) extension of meaning (generalization)

# E.g.: *hard drive* (originally meant only *heavy traffic on city roads*, now also refers to *slow work of a computer*);

# 2) narrowing of meaning (specialization)

# E.g.: *garage* (once meant *any safe place*, now means specifically *a building for housing automobiles*);

# 3) transference of meaning (metaphor and metonymy)

# E.g.: *He is such a bear ; Black coats walked along the street.*

# 4) Elevation of meaning (amelioration)

# E.g.: «*minister* (now means an important public official, but in earlier times meant merely *servant*)

# (Rayevska : 149)

# 5) Degradation of meaning (perjoration)

# E.g.: *vulgar* (originally meant *happy*)

# Semantic extension is one of the most important ways of enlarging the vocabulary.

# 1.2. Stylistic Classification of the English Word-stock

# «The word-stock of any language must be presented a system, the elements of which are interconnected, interrelated, and yet independent.»

# (Galperin : 70)

# Problems connected with vocabulary are so varied that it is difficult for many scholars to refer every given word to a certain subsystem of English word-stock.

# Stylistically, the English language may be divided into three main layers:

#  Literary layer;

#  Neutral layer;

#  Colloquial layer.

#  Neutral layer of English vocabulary is the most stable one. The use of it is unrestricted. It can be employed in any sphere of human activity.

#  «The literary layer of words consists of groups accepted as legitimate members of the English vocabulary. They have no local or dialectal character.

#  The colloquial layer of words is not infrequently limited to a definite language locality where it circulates.»

# (Rayevska : 72)

#  Most of the scholars distinguish among the literary vocabulary

#  Common literary words;

#  Terms and learned words;

#  Poetic words;

#  Archaic words;

#  Barbarisms and foreign words;

#  Literary coinages including nonce-words.

# The colloquial vocabulary falls into the following groups:

#  Common colloquial words;

#  Slang;

#  Jargons;

#  Professional words;

#  Dialectal words;

#  Vulgar words;

#  Colloquial coinages.

# The Standard English vocabulary consists of common literary, neutral, and common colloquial words.

# Common literary words are mostly used in writing and in polished speech.

# The object of this paper is common colloquial vocabulary as it is considered to be a part of Modern Standard English and is constantly replenished by special colloquial vocabulary.

# A lot of words from non-standard colloquial vocabulary are gradually losing their non-standard character and becoming widely recognized. However, they do not lose their colloquial association.

# E.g.: guy (young man).

# 1.2.1. The Notion of Slang, Jargon, and Techspeak

# The term *slang* is extremely vague and ambiguous. There are a lot of distinctions of it but none of them is specified exactly. It is presented both as a special vocabulary and as a special language. So, in most of the dictionaries *sl.* (slang) is used as a convenient stylistic notation for a word or a phrase that cannot be specified more exactly.

# *Jargon* is a recognized term for a group of words that exists in almost every language and whose aim is to preserve secrecy within a social group of people. The most well-known jargons in English are: the jargon of thieves, generally known as cant; the jargon of jazz musicians etc.

# Some American linguists refer to informal language as *slang* and reserve the term *jargon* for the technical vocabularies of various occupations. Some linguists consider *slang* to be regional, and *jargon* – social in character.

# *Professionalisms* are the words used in a definite trade, profession or calling by people connected by common interests both at work. Professionalisms are correlated to terms, which are coined to nominate new concepts that appear in the process of technical progress and the development of science.

# In this paper we research the language used by hackers – a technical culture that appeared under the influence of computerization. *Hackish* (see Glossary of Terms) is traditionally *the jargon* though many linguists distinguish it as *slang.*

To make a confused situation worse, the line between hackish slang and the vocabulary of technical programming and computer science is fuzzy, and shifts over time. Further, this vocabulary is shared with a wider technical culture of programmers, many of whom are not hackers and do not speak or recognize hackish slang.

Accordingly, we tried to distinguish among three categories:

 *slang*: informal language from mainstream English or non-technical subcultures (bikers, thieves, rock fans etc).

 *jargon*: informal «slangy» language peculiar to or predominantly found among hackers; it is the language hackers use among themselves for social communication, fun, and technical debates.

 *techspeak*: the formal professional technical vocabulary of programming, computer science, electronics, and other fields connected to hacking.

This terminology will be consistently used throughout the remainder of this research project.

The distinction between jargon and techspeak is extremely delicate. A lot of techspeak originated as jargon, and there is a steady continuing uptake of jargon into techspeak. On the other hand, a lot of jargon arises from generalization of techspeak terms (see 2.2.4.).

It is very difficult to research the apparent origin of technical terms, for several reasons. First, many hackish usages have been independently reinvented multiple times, even among the more obscure and intricate neologisms. It often seems that the generative processes underlying hackish jargon formation have an internal logic so powerful as to create substantial parallelism in different languages. Second, the networks tend to propagate innovations so quickly that `first use' is often impossible to trace.

In general, techspeak considers any term that communicates primarily by a denotation well established in textbooks, technical dictionaries, or standards documents.

**1.2. Hackerdom**

"The word hack doesn't really have 69 different meanings", according to MIT hacker Phil Agre.

Hacking might be characterized as `an appropriate application of ingenuity'. An important secondary meaning of hack is `a creative practical joke'.

The «hacker culture», or hackerdom is a loosely networked collection of subcultures that contains some important shared experiences, shared roots, and shared values. It has its own myths, heroes, villains, folk epics, in-jokes, taboos, and dreams. Because hackers as a group are particularly creative people who define themselves partly by rejection of `normal' values and working habits, it has unusually rich and conscious traditions for an intentional culture less than 40 years old.

As usual with slang, the special vocabulary of hackers helps hold their culture together; it helps hackers to recognize each other's places in the community and expresses shared values and experiences. Also as usual, not knowing the slang (or using it inappropriately) defines one as an outsider, a mundane, or (worst of all in hackish vocabulary) possibly even a **suit**. All human cultures use slang in this threefold way -- as a tool of communication, inclusion, and exclusion.

However, among hackers slang has a subtler aspect, which can be paralleled to the slang of jazz musicians and various kinds of fine artists but hard to detect in most technical or scientific cultures; parts of it are code for shared states of consciousness*.* There is a big range of altered states and problem-solving mental states basic to high-level hacking. Hacker slang encodes these subtleties in many unobvious ways. For example, there is a distinction between a **kluge** and an **elegant** solution, and the differing connotations attached to each. The distinction is not only of engineering significance; it reaches the nature of the generative processes in program design. Hacker slang is unusually rich in implications of this kind, of overtones and undertones that reveal the hackish psychology.

Hackers, as a rule, play with words and are very conscious and inventive in their use of language. Thus, linguistic invention in most subcultures of the modern West is largely an unconscious process. Hackers, by contrast, regard slang formation and use as a game to be played for conscious pleasure. Their inventions thus display an almost unique combination of enjoyment of language-play with the discrimination of educated and powerful intelligence. Further, the electronic media which keeps them together are fluid, `hot' connections, well adapted to both adopting of new slang and the ruthless culling of weak and exclusion of «weak» and old-fashioned words and word combinations. The results of this process give us a uniquely intense and accelerated view of linguistic evolution in action.

Hacker slang also challenges some common linguistic and anthropological assumptions. For example, it has recently become fashionable to speak of `low-context' versus `high-context' communication. Low-context communication is characterized by precision, clarity, and completeness of self-contained utterances. It is typical in cultures, which value logic, objectivity, individualism, and competition. By contrast, high-context communication (elliptical, emotive, nuance-filled, multi-modal, heavily coded) is associated with cultures, which value subjectivity, consensus, cooperation, and tradition. Hackerdom is widely known by extremely low-context interaction with computers and exhibits primarily "low-context" values, but cultivates an almost absurdly high-context slang style.

**1.2.1. Hacker subcultures**

The most well-known hacker subcultures are:

 Crackers;

 Phreakers;

 LISPers.

Cracking is the act of breaking into the computer system; what a cracker does. Contrary to widespread myth, this process does not usually involve hackish brilliance, but rather persistence and repetition of tricks that exploit common weaknesses in the security of target systems. Crackers are considered to be mediocre hackers. Use of both these neologisms reflects a strong revulsion against the theft and vandalism perpetrated by cracking rings. It is expected that any real hacker does some playful cracking and knows many of the basic techniques, anyone is expected to have overcome the desire to do so except for urgent, practical reasons (for example, if it’s necessary to break a security in order to do something lively necessary).

 Thus, there is a greater difference between hackerdom and crackerdom than most peoplemisled by sensationalistic journalism might think. Crackers tend to gather in small, very secretive groups that have little overlap with the huge, open poly-culture of hackers; though crackers often describe themselves as hackers; hackers, in their turn, consider crackers a lower form of life; they do not respect anyone who breaks into someone else’s computer.

Phreaking is the art and science of cracking the phone network (so as, for example, to make free long-distance calls). By extension, security-cracking is used in any other context (especially, on communications networks). At one time phreaking was a semi-respectable activity among hackers; there was a gentleman's agreement that phreaking as an intellectual game and a form of exploration was normal, but serious theft of services was a taboo. There was significant crossover between the hacker community and the hard-core phone phreaks who ran semi-underground networks of their own. This ethos began to break down in the mid-1980s as wider dissemination of the techniques put them in the hands of less responsible phreaks. Around the same time, changes in the phone network made old-style technical ingenuity less effective as a way of hacking it, so phreaking came to depend more on criminal acts such as stealing phone-card numbers.

LISP (from `LISt Processing language', but mythically from `Lots of Irritating Superfluous Parentheses' is a language based on the ideas of variable-length lists and trees as fundamental data types, and the interpretation of code as data and vice-versa. All LISP functions and programs are expressions that return values; this, together with the high memory utilization of LISPs, gave rise to a famous saying (a periphrasis of Oscar Wilde quote) that "LISP programmers know the value of everything and the cost of nothing".

**Part II**

**2.1.Jargon Construction**

There are some standard methods of jargonification that became established quite early (i.e., before 1970). These include verb doubling, soundalike slang, the `-P' convention, overgeneralization, spoken inarticulations, and anthropomorphization. These methods, as well as the standard comparatives for design quality are covered below.

Of these six, verb doubling, overgeneralization, anthropomorphization, and (especially) spoken inarticulations have become quite general; but soundalike slang is still largely confined to *MIT* and other large universities, and the `-P' convention is found only where *LISPers* flourish.

## 2.1.1. Verb Doubling

A standard construction in English is to double a verb and use it as an exclamation.

E.g. "Bang, bang!" or "Quack, quack!»

Most of these are names for noises. Hackers also double verbs as a concise, sometimes sarcastic comment on what the implied subject does. Also, a doubled verb is often used to terminate a conversation, in the process remarking on the current state of affairs or what the speaker intends to do next. Typical examples involve win, lose, hack, flame, (see Glossary of Terms) culture has one \*tripling\* convention unrelated to this; the names of `joke' topic groups often have a tripled last element. The first and paradigmatic example was alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork.

Other infamous examples have included:

*alt.french.captain.borg.borg.borg*
*alt.wesley.crusher.die.die.die*
*comp.unix.internals.system.calls.brk.brk.brk*
*sci.physics.edward.teller.boom.boom.boom*
*alt.sadistic.dentists.drill.drill.drill*

**2.1.2. Soundalike Slang**

Hackers often make rhymes or puns in order to convert an ordinary word or phrase in order to achieve a humorous effect. It is considered particularly flavorful if the phrase is bent so as to include some other jargon word. For instance, the computer hobbyist magazine "Dr. Dobb's Journal" is almost always referred to among hackers as `Dr. Frob's Journal' or simply `Dr. Frob's'. Terms of this kind that have been in fairly wide use include names for newspapers

 E.g.: Boston Herald - Horrid (or Harried)

 Boston Globe - Boston Glob

 Houston (or San Francisco) Chronicle - the Crocknicle (or the Comical)

 New York Times - New York Slime

However, the following terms are often made up on the spur of the moment. Standard examples include:

 IBM 360 - IBM Three-Sickly

 Government Property -- Do Not Duplicate (on keys)

ð Government Duplicity -- Do Not Propagate

 for historical reasons - for hysterical raisins

Soundalike slang has been compared to the Cockney rhyming slang it has been compared to in the past (see the Glossary of Terms). They are not really similar because Cockney substitutions are opaque whereas hacker punning jargon is intentionally transparent.

**2.1.3. The -P convention**

The –P convention means turning a word into a question by adding the syllable `P'. It originated from the LISP convention of appending the letter `P' to denote a predicate. The question expects a yes/no answer.

 E.g.: 1) At dinnertime:

 Question: "Foodp?"

 Answer: "Yeah, I'm pretty hungry." or "T!"

 2) Instead of «How are you doing?»:

 Question: "State-of-the-world-P?"

 Answer: (Straight) "I'm about to go home."

 Answer: (Humorous) "Yes, the world has a state."

 3) On the phone to Florida:

 Question: "State-p Florida?"

 Answer: "Been reading JARGON.TXT again, eh?"

Once, when Bill Gosper, a famous hacker, was at a Chinese restaurant with his friends, he wanted to know whether someone would like to share with him a two-person-sized bowl of soup. His inquiry was: "Split-p soup?" It is known to be one of the best hacks.

 The most frequently used positive reply to a question using [**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](http://www.fwi.uva.nl/~mes/jargon/t/The-Pconvention.html)) is «T’, which is taken from the LISP terminology and means «true’. Some LISP hackers use `T' and `NIL' (New Implementation of LISP) instead of `Yes' and `No' almost reflexively. This sometimes causes misunderstandings. For example, when a waiter or flight attendant asks whether a hacker wants coffee, he may absently respond `T', meaning that he wants coffee; but of course he will be brought a cup of tea instead.

**2.1.4. Generalization**

A very conspicuous feature of jargon is the frequency with which techspeak items such as names of program tools, command language primitives, and even assembler codes are applied to contexts outside of computing wherever hackers find amusing analogies to them. One of the best-known examples of generalization is that Unix hackers often grep (see the Glossary of Terms) for things rather than search for them.

Hackers enjoy generalization on the grammatical level as well. They add the wrong endings to various words and them make nouns and verbs, often by extending a standard rule to non-uniform cases (or vice versa).

E.g.: porous - porosity

 generous - generosity

Hackers successfully generalize:

 mysterious - mysteriosity

 ferrous - ferrosity

 obvious => obviosity

 dubious => dubiosity

Another class of common construction uses the suffix `-itude' to abstract a quality from almost any adjective or noun. This usage arises especially in cases where mainstream English would perform the same abstraction through `-iness' or `-ingness'.

E.g. win => winnitude (a common exclamation)

 loss => lossitude

 cruft => cruftitude

 lame => lameitude

Some hackers cheerfully reverse this transformation. For example, they argue, that the horizontal degree lines on a globe ought to be called `lats' because they measure latitude!

Also, hackers noun verbs.

 E.g.: "I'll mouse it up", "Hang on while I clipboard it over".

This is only a slight overgeneralization in modern English that all verbs can be nouned. In hackish, however, it is good form to mark them in some nonstandard way.

 E.g.: disgust => disgustitude

 hack => hackification

English as a whole is already heading in the direction towards pure-positional grammar like Chinese; hackers are simply a little ahead of the process.

However, hackers avoid the unimaginative verb-making techniques characteristic of marketroids, bean counters, and the Pentagon; a hacker would never, for example, `productize', `prioritize', or `securitize' things. Hackers have a strong aversion to bureaucratic bafflegab and regard those who use it with contempt.

Further, certain kinds of nonstandard plural forms prevail in hacker jargon. Some of these go back quite a ways; the TMRC Dictionary includes an entry which implies that the plural of `mouse' is meeces, and notes that the defined plural of `caboose' is `cabeese'. This latter has apparently been a standard joke among railroad enthusiasts for many years.

On a similarly Anglo-Saxon note, almost anything ending in `x' may form plurals in `-xen'. Even words ending in phonetic /k/ alone are sometimes treated this way.

E.g.: `soxen' for a bunch of socks.

Other funny plurals are `frobbotzim' for the plural of `frobbozz' (see frobnitz) and `Unices' and `Twenices' (rather than `Unixes' and `Twenexes'. But note that `Unixen' and `Twenexen' are never used; it has been suggested that this is because `-ix' and `-ex' are Latin singular endings that attract a Latinate plural. Finally, it has been suggested to general approval that the plural of `mongoose' ought to be `polygoose'.

The pattern here, as with other hackish grammatical quirks, is generalization of an inflectional rule that in English is either an import or a fossil (such as the Hebrew plural ending `-im', or the Anglo-Saxon plural suffix `-en') to cases where it isn't normally considered to apply.

This is not `poor grammar', as hackers are generally quite well aware of what they are doing when they distort the language. It is grammatical creativity, a form of playfulness. It is done not to impress but to amuse, and never at the expense of clarity.

**2.1.5. Spoken Inarticulations**

Words such as `mumble', `sigh', and `groan' are spoken in places where their referent might more naturally be used. It has been suggested that this usage derives from the impossibility of representing such noises in electronic mail. Interestingly, the same sorts of constructions have been showing up with increasing frequency in comic strips. Another expression sometimes heard is "Complain!" meaning "I have a complaint!"

**2.1.6. Anthropomorphization**

Semantically, one rich source of jargon constructions is the hackish tendency to anthropomorphize hardware and software. This isn't done in a naive way; hackers do not believe that the things they work on every day are `alive' but it is common to hear of hardware or software as though it has some creatures talking to each other inside it, with intentions and desires. E.g.: "The protocol handler got confused", «Programs are trying to do smth», «A routine’s goal in life is to X". One even hears explanations like "... and its poor little brain couldn't understand X, and it died."

Anything with a really complex behavioral repertoire is usually thought of as `like a person' rather than `like a thing'. Thus, anthropomorphisation makes sentences easier to understand.

**2.1.7. Comparatives**

Many words in hacker jargon have to be understood as members of sets of comparatives. This is especially true of the adjectives and nouns used to describe the beauty and functional quality of code. Here is an approximately correct spectrum:

monstrosity

brain-damage

screw

bug

lose

misfeature

crock

kluge

hack

win

feature

elegance

perfection

The last is spoken of as a mythical absolute, approximated but never actually attained.

Another similar scale is used for describing the reliability of software: broken

flaky

dodgy

fragile

brittle

solid

robust

bulletproof

armor-plated

`Dodgy' is primarily Commonwealth Hackish and it is rare in the U.S.A. and may change places with `flaky' for some speakers.

Coinages for describing lossage seem to call forth the very finest in hackish linguistic inventiveness.

It has been truly said that hackers have even more words for equipment failures than Yiddish has for obnoxious people.

**2.2. Hacker Style**

**2.2.1. Hacker Speech Style**

Hackish speech generally features extremely precise diction, careful word choice, a relatively large working vocabulary, and relatively little use of contractions or street slang. Dry humor, irony, puns, and a mildly flippant attitude are highly valued -- but an underlying seriousness and intelligence are essential. One should use just enough jargon to communicate precisely and identify oneself as a member of the culture; overuse of jargon or a breathless, excessively gung-ho attitude is not respected.

This speech style is a variety of the precisionist English normally spoken by scientists, design engineers, and academics in technical fields. In contrast with the methods of jargon construction, it is fairly constant throughout hackerdom.

It has been observed that many hackers are confused by negative questions - or the people to whom they talk are often confused by the sense of their answers. They have done so much programming that distinguishes between if (going) ... that means «If we are going» and if (!going) ...that means «If we are not going» when they parse the question "Aren't you going?" it seems to be asking the opposite question from "Are you going?", and so merits an answer in the opposite sense. This confuses English-speaking non-hackers because they were taught to answer as though the negative part weren't there. In some other languages (including Russian, Chinese, and Japanese) the hackish interpretation is standard and the problem wouldn't arise. Hackers often find themselves wishing for a word like French `si' or German `doch' with which one could unambiguously answer `yes' to a negative question.

For similar reasons, English-speaking hackers almost never use double negatives, even if they live in a region where colloquial usage allows them. The thought of uttering something that logically ought to be an affirmative knowing it will be misparsed as a negative tends to disturb them.

In a related vein, hackers sometimes make a game of answering questions containing logical connectives with a strictly literal rather than colloquial interpretation. A non-hacker who is indelicate enough to ask a question like "So, are you working on finding that bug now or leaving it until later?" is likely to get the perfectly correct answer "Yes!" (that is, "Yes, I'm doing it either now or later, and you didn't ask which!").

## 2.2.2.Hacker Writing Style

As it has been said, hackers often coin jargon by generalizing grammatical rules. This is one aspect of a more general fondness for form-versus-content language jokes that shows up particularly in hackish writing. Hackers claim that many people have been known to criticize hacker jargon by observing: «This sentence no verb», or «Too repetetetive», or «Bad speling», or «Incorrectspa cing.»

Similarly, intentional spoonerisms are often made of phrases relating to confusion or things that are confusing; `dain bramage’ for `brain damage’ is perhaps the most common (similarly, a hacker would be likely to write «Excuse me, I’m cixelsyd today», rather than «I’m dyslexic today»). This sort of thing is quite common and is enjoyed by all concerned.

Hackers tend to use quotes as balanced delimiters like parentheses, much to the dismay of American editors. Thus, if «Jim is going» is a phrase, and so are «Bill runs» and «Spock groks», then hackers generally prefer to write: «Jim is going», «Bill runs», and «Spock groks». This is incorrect according to Standard American usage (which would put the continuation commas and the final period inside the string quotes).

Hackers tend to distinguish between `scare’ quotes and `speech’ quotes; that is, to use British-style single quotes for marking and reserve American-style double quotes for actual reports of speech or text included from elsewhere. Interestingly, some authorities describe this as correct general usage.

One further not standard permutation is a hackish tendency to do marking quotes by using apostrophes (single quotes) in pairs; that is, ‘like this’.

In the E-mail style of UNIX hackers in particular there is a tendency for usernames and the names of commands and C routines to remain uncapitalized even when they occur at the beginning of sentences. For many hackers, the case of such identifiers becomes a part of their internal representation (the `spelling’).

Behind these nonstandard hackerisms there is a rule that precision of expression is more important than conformance to traditional rules; where the latter create ambiguity or lossage of information. It is notable in this respect that other hackish inventions in vocabulary tend to carry very precise shades of meaning even when constructed to appear slangy and loose.

Hackers have also developed a number of punctuation and emphasis conventions.

One of these is that TEXT IN ALL CAPS IS INTERPRETED AS `LOUD’, a person that writes in this way may be asked to «stop shouting, please, you’re hurting my ears!»

Also, it is common to use bracketing with unusual characters to signify emphasis. The asterisk is the most common, even though this interferes with the common use of the asterisk as a footnote mark.

E.g.: «What the **hell**?»

The underscore is also common, suggesting underlining. This is particularly common with book titles.

E.g.: «It is often alleged that Joe Haldeman wrote *TheForeverWar* as a rebuttal to Robert Heinlein’s earlier novel of the future military, *StarshipTroopers*.».

Other forms exemplified by «=hell=», «\hell/», or «/hell/» are occasionally seen. Some hackers claim that «in the last example the first slash pushes the letters over to the right to make them italic, and the second keeps them from falling over».

Finally, words may also be emphasized L I K E T H I S, or by a series of carets (^) under them on the next line of the text.

There is a semantic difference between emphasis LIKE THIS(which emphasizes the phrase as a whole), and emphasis L I K E T H I S (which suggests the writer speaking very slowly and distinctly, as if to a very young child or a mentally impaired person). Bracketing a word with the `’ character may also indicate that the writer wishes readers to consider that an action is taking place or that a sound is being made.

E.g.: `bang’, `ring’, `mumble’.

There is also an accepted convention for `writing under erasure’; the text «Be nice to this fool^H^H^H^Hgentleman, he’s visiting from corporate HQ.» may be interpreted as «Be nice to this fool, er, gentleman...»

Crackers, phone phreaks, and warez d00dz (mostly teenagers running PC-clones from their bedrooms) have developed their own characteristic jargon, heavily influenced by skateboard lingo and underground-rock slang.

Here is a brief guide to cracker and warez d00dz usage:

 Misspell frequently. The substitutions

 phone => fone

 freak => phreak are obligatory.

 Always substitute `z's for `s's. (i.e. "codes" -> "codez").

 Type random emphasis characters after a post line (i.e. "Hey Dudes!#!$#$!#!$").

 Use the emphatic `k' prefix ("k-kool", "k-rad", "k-awesome") frequently.

 Abbreviate compulsively ("I got lotsa warez w/ docs").

 Substitute `0' for `o' ("r0dent", "l0zer").

 TYPE ALL IN CAPS LOCK, SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE YELLING ALL THE TIME.

`\*’ signifies multiplication but two asterisks in a row are a shorthand for exponentiation (this derives from FORTRAN). Thus, one might write 2 \*\* 8 = 256.

Another notation for exponentiation one sees more frequently uses the caret (^, ASCII 1011110); one might write instead `2^8 = 256’.

In on-line exchanges, hackers tend to use decimal forms or improper fractions (`3.5’ or `7/2’) rather than `typewriter style’ mixed fractions (`3-1/2’). The major motive here is probably that the former are more readable, together with a desire to avoid the risk that the latter might be read as `three minus one-half’. The decimal form is definitely preferred for fractions with a terminating decimal representation; there may be some cultural influence here from the high status of scientific notation.

Another on-line convention, used especially for very large or very small numbers, is taken from C (which derived it from FORTRAN). This is a form of `scientific notation’ using `e’ to replace `\*10^’; for example, one year is about 3e7 seconds long.

The tilde (~) is commonly used in a quantifying sense of `approximately’; that is, `~50’ means `about fifty’.

On USENET common logical and relational operators such as `|’, `&’, `||’, `&&’, `!’, `==’, `!=’, `>’, `<’, `>=’, and `=<’ are often combined with English. The use of prefix `!’ as a loose synonym for `not-‘ or `no-‘ is particularly common; thus, `!clue’ is read `no-clue’ or `clueless’.

A related practice borrows syntax from preferr oday’s

 net volumes?

 #endif /\* FLAME \*/

 I guess they figured the price premium for true

 frame-based semantic analysis was too high.

 Unfortunately, it’s also the only workable approach.

 I wouldn’t recommend purchase of this product unless

 you’re on a **very** tight budget.

 #include

 --

 == Frank Foonly (Fubarco Systems)

In the above, the `#ifdef’ / `#endif’ pair is a conditional compilation syntax from C; here, it implies that the text between (which is a [**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](/local/misc/JARGON/body-f/flame.html)) should be evaluated only if you have turned on (or defined on) the switch FLAME. The `#include’ at the end is C for «include standard disclaimer here»; the `standard disclaimer’ is understood to read, roughly, «These are my personal opinions and not to be construed as the official position of my employer.»

The top section in the example, with > at the left margin, is an example of an inclusion convention we’ll discuss below.

Hackers also mix letters and numbers more freely than in mainstream usage. In particular, it is good hackish style to write a digit sequence where you intend the reader to understand the text string that names that number in English. So, hackers prefer to write `1970s’ rather than `nineteen-seventies’ or `1970’s’ (the latter looks like a possessive).

It should also be noted that hackers exhibit much less reluctance to use multiply nested parentheses than is normal in English. Part of this is almost certainly due to influence from LISP (which uses deeply nested parentheses (like this (see?)) in its syntax a lot), but it has also been suggested that a more basic hacker trait of enjoying playing with complexity and pushing systems to their limits is in operation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that many studies of on-line communication have shown that electronic links have a de-inhibiting effect on people. Deprived of the body-language cues through which emotional state is expressed, people tend to forget everything about other parties except what is presented over that ASCII link. This has both good and bad effects. A good one is that it encourages honesty and tends to break down hierarchical authority relationships; a bad one is that it may encourage depersonalization and gratuitous rudeness. Perhaps in response to this, experienced netters often display a sort of conscious formal politesse in their writing that has passed out of fashion in other spoken and written media (for example, the phrase «Well said, sir!» is not uncommon).

Many introverted hackers who are next to inarticulate in person communicate with considerable fluency over the net, perhaps precisely because they can forget on an unconscious level that they are dealing with people and thus don’t feel stressed and anxious as they would face to face.

Though it is considered gauche to publicly criticize posters for poor spelling or grammar, the network places a premium on literacy and clarity of expression. It may well be that future historians of literature will see in it a revival of the great tradition of personal letters as art.

**2.2.3. International Style**

Though the hacker-speak of other languages often uses translations of jargon from English, the local variations are interesting, and knowledge of them may be of some use to travelling hackers.

There are some variations in hacker usage as reported in the English spoken in Great Britain and the Commonwealth (Canada, Australia, India, etc. -- though Canada is heavily influenced by American usage). Commonwealth hackers are more likely to pronounce transactions like «char» and «soc», etc., as spelled /char/, /sok/, as opposed to American /keir/ and /sohsh/. Dots in newsgroup names (especially two-component names tend to be pronounced more often.

E.g.: soc.wibble is /sok dot wib’l/ rather than /sohsh wib’l/.

The prefix meta may be pronounced /mee’t\*/; similarly, Greek letter is usually /bee’t\*/, zeta is usually /zee’t\*/, and so forth. Preferred metasyntactic variables include ‘eek’, ‘ook’, ‘frodo’, and ‘bilbo’; ‘wibble’, ‘wobble’, and in emergencies ‘wubble’, ‘flob’, etc.

Alternatives to verb doubling include suffixes ‘-o-rama’, ‘frenzy’, and ‘city’.

E.g.: «hack-o-rama!», «core dump frenzy!», «barf city!’

Finally, the American terms for «parenthesis», «brackets», and «braces» for (), [], and {} are uncommon. Commonwealth hackish prefers «brackets», «square brackets», and «curly brackets».

Hackers in Western Europe and (especially) Scandinavia report that they often use a mixture of English and their native languages for technical conversation. Occasionally they develop idioms in their English usage that are influenced by their native-language styles. Some of these are reported here.

**2.2.6.Hacker Humour**

A distinctive style of shared intellectual humor found among hackers has the following marked characteristics:

1. Fascination with form-vs.-content jokes, paradoxes, and humor having to do with confusion of. A metasyntactic variable is a variable in notation used to describe syntax, and meta-language is language used to describe language.

Metasyntactic variable is a name used in examples and understood to stand for whatever thing is under discussion, or any random member of a class of things under discussion. The word foo is the canonical example. To avoid confusion, hackers never use `foo' or other words like it as permanent names for anything. In filenames, a common convention is that any filename beginning with a metasyntactic-variable name is a scratch file that may be deleted at any time.

To some extent, the list of one's preferred metasyntactic variables is a cultural signature. They occur both in series and as singletons. Here are a few common signatures:

 foo, bar, baz, quux, quuux, quuuux...:

Some jargon terms are also used as metasyntactic names; barf and mumble, for example.

 2. Elaborate deadpan parodies of large intellectual constructs, such as standards documents, language descriptions (see [**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](../i/INTERCAL.html)), and even entire scientific theories, for instance, [**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](../q/quantumbogodynamics.html), [**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](../c/computron.html)).

3. Fascination with puns and wordplay.

**2.3. Pronunciation Features**

Pronunciation keys provided in the Glossary of Terms are not dictionary words pronounced as in standard. Slashes bracket phonetic pronunciations, which are to be interpreted using the following conventions:

1. Syllables are hyphen-separated, except that an accent or back-accent follows accented syllable (the back-accent marks a secondary accent in some words of four or more syllables). If no accent is given, the word is pronounced with equal accentuation on all syllables (this is common for abbreviations).

1. Consonants are pronounced as in standard English:

· `g' is always hard (as in "got" rather than "giant");

· terminal `r’ (as in «hard» or «more») may be pronounced or not depending on the local dialect

· `j' is the sound that occurs twice in "judge";

· `s' is always as in "pass", never a z sound;

· the diagraph `ch' is soft (as in "church" rather than "chemist");

· the digraph `kh' is the guttural of "loch" or "l'chaim";

· the digraph 'gh' is the aspirated g+h of "bughouse" or "ragheap" (this case is rare in English).

2. Uppercase letters are pronounced as their English letter names; E.g.: /H-L-L/ is equivalent to /aych el el/.

/Z/ may be pronounced /zee/ or /zed/ depending on the local dialect.

4. Vowels are represented as follows:

 /a/

 back, that

 /ah/

 father, palm

 /ar/ or /a:/

 far, mark

 /aw/

 flaw, caught

 /ay/

 bake, rain

 /e/

 less, men

 /ee/

 easy, ski

 /eir/ or /ea/

 their, software

 /i/

 trip, hit

 /ai/

 life, sky

 /o/

 block, stock (see note)

 /oh/

 flow, sew

 /oo/

 loot, through

 /or/ or /o:/

 more, door

 /ow/

 out, how

 /oy/

 boy, coin

 /uh/

 but, some

 /u/

 put, foot

 /y/

 yet, young

 /yoo/

 few, chew

The glyph /\*/ is used for the `schwa' sound of unstressed or occluded vowels (the one that is often written with an upside-down `e'). The schwa vowel is omitted in syllables containing vocalic r, l, m or n; that is, `kitten' and `color' would be rendered /kit'n/ and /kuhl'r/, not /kit'\*n/ and /kuhl'\*r/.

The above table reflects mainly distinctions found in Standard English (that is, the neutral dialect spoken by TV network announcers and typical of educated speech). Speakers of British Received Pronunciation can smash terminal /r/ and all unstressed vowels. Speakers of many varieties of southern American will automatically change /o/ to /aw/ or /ah/, etc. Entries with a pronunciation of `//' are written-only usages.

**Conclusions**

Computerization, hacker culture, and hacker jargon are viewed here as a source of lexical, semantic-stylistic, and phonetic changes it introduces into Modern English.

Further investigation of the hacker culture influencing Modern English from the perspective

**Bibliography**

1. Амосова Н.Н. Английская контекстология. Л., 1968. – 126с.

2. Арнольд И.В. Стилистика современного английского языка. М., Высшая школа, 1973. – 301с.

3. Гальперин И.Р. Очерки по стилистике английского языка. М.: Библиотека филолога, 1958. –458с.

4. Гинзбург Р.З., Хидекель С.С., Князева Г.Ю. и Санкин А.А. Лексикология английского языка. – 2-е изд., испр. и доп. – М.: Высшая школа,1979. – 269с.

5. Каращук П.М. Словообразование английского языка. М., 1965.

6. Кубрякова Е.С. Что такое словообразование. М., 1965.

7. Мешков О.Д. Словообразование современного английского языка. М., 1972.

8. Мостовий М.І. Лексикологія англійської мови. Х.: Основа, 1993. – 256с.

9. Раєвська Н.М. Лексикологія англійської мови

10. Швейцар А.Д. Литературный английский язик в США и Англии. М., 1971.

**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**.

[**Îøèáêà! Çàêëàäêà íå îïðåäåëåíà.**](http://www.yahoo.com./languages/theJargonFile)

Compilers: Raphael Finkel (1975), In 1976, Mark Crispin (1976), Mark Crispin and Guy L. Steele Jr. (1981), Charles Spurgeon, Raphael Finkel, Don Woods, Mark Crispin, Richard M. Stallman, and Geoff Goodfellow.

**Glossary of Terms**

**= A =**

**AI** /A-I/ /n./ Abbreviation for `Artificial Intelligence', so common that the full form is almost never written or spoken among hackers.

**AI-complete** /A-I k\*m-pleet'/ /adj./ [MIT, Stanford: by analogy with `NP-complete' (see NP-)] Used to describe problems or subproblems in AI, to indicate that the solution presupposes a solution to the `strong AI problem' (that is, the synthesis of a human-level intelligence). A problem that is AI-complete is, in other words, just too hard. Examples of AI-complete problems are `The Vision Problem' (building a system that can see as well as a human) and `The Natural Language Problem' (building a system that can understand and speak a natural language as well as a human).

**AI koans** /A-I koh'anz/ /pl.n./

A series of pastiches of Zen teaching riddles created by Danny Hillis at the MIT AI Lab around various major figures of the Lab's culture

**ASCII** /as'kee/ /n./ [acronym: American Standard Code for Information Interchange] The predominant character set encoding of present-day computers.

**ASCII art** /n./

The fine art of drawing diagrams using the ASCII character set (mainly `|', `-', `/', `\', and `+').

**ASCIIbetical order** /as'kee-be'-t\*-kl or'dr/ /adj.,n./ Used to indicate that data is sorted in ASCII collated order rather than alphabetical order.

**= B =**

**backbone site** /n./ A key Usenet and email site; one that processes a large amount of third-party traffic, especially if it is the home site of any of the regional coordinators for the Usenet maps.

**BAD** /B-A-D/ /adj./ [IBM: acronym, `Broken As Designed'] Said of a program that is bogus because of bad design and misfeatures rather than because of bugginess.

**bagbiter** /bag'bi:t-\*r/ /n./

1. a program or a computer, that fails to work, or works in a remarkably clumsy manner.

E.g.:"This text editor won't let me make a file with a line longer than 80 characters! What a bagbiter!"

2. A person who has caused you some trouble, inadvertently or otherwise, typically by failing to program the computer properly.

 Syn.: loser, cretin, chomper.

3. `bite the bag' /vi./ To fail in some manner. "The computer keeps crashing every five minutes." "Yes, the disk controller is really biting the bag." The original loading of these terms was almost undoubtedly obscene, possibly referring to the scrotum, but in their current usage they have become almost completely sanitized.

ITS's `lexiphage' program was the first and to date only known example of a program intended to be a bagbiter.

**bagbiting** /adj./ Having the quality of a bagbiter. "This bagbiting system won't let me compute the factorial of a negative number."

**bang**

1. /n./ Common spoken name for `!' /interj./ An exclamation signifying roughly "I have achieved enlightenment!", or "The dynamite has cleared out my brain!"

**barf** /barf/ or /ba:f/ **/n.,v./** [from mainstream slang meaning `vomit']

1. /interj./ Term of disgust.

2. /vi./ to express disgust.

E.g.: "I showed him my latest hack and he barfed" means only that he complained about it, not that he literally vomited.

3. /vi./ To fail to work because of unacceptable input, perhaps with a suitable error message, perhaps not.

E.g.: "The division operation barfs if you try to divide by 0." means that the division operation checks for an attempt to divide by zero, and if one is encountered it causes the operation to fail in some unspecified, but generally obvious, manner.

***Syn.:*** choke, gag.

In Commonwealth Hackish, `barf' is generally replaced by `puke' or `vom'.

**barfulation** /bar`fyoo-lay'sh\*n/ /interj./

Variation of barf used around the Stanford area. An exclamation, expressing disgust. On seeing some particularly bad code one might exclaim, "Barfulation! Who wrote this, Quux?"

**barfulous** /bar'fyoo-l\*s/ /adj./

(alt. **`barfucious'**, /bar-fyoo-sh\*s/)

Said of something that would make anyone barf, if only for esthetic reasons.

**BASIC** /bay'-sic/ /n./ [acronym: Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code] A programming language, originally designed for Dartmouth's experimental timesharing system in the early 1960s, which has since become the leading cause of brain damage in proto-hackers. Edsger W. Dijkstra observed in "Selected Writings on Computing: A Personal Perspective" that "It is practically impossible to teach good programming style to students that have had prior exposure to BASIC: as potential programmers they are mentally mutilated beyond hope of regeneration."

This is another case (like Pascal) of the cascading lossage that happens when a language deliberately designed as an educational toy gets taken too seriously. A novice can write short BASIC programs (on the order of 10-20 lines) very easily; writing anything longer (a) is very painful, and (b) encourages bad habits that will make it harder to use more powerful languages well. This wouldn't be so bad if historical accidents hadn't made BASIC so common on low-end micros. As it is, it ruins thousands of potential wizards a year.

[1995: Some languages called `BASIC' aren't quite this nasty any more, having acquired Pascal- and C-like procedures and control structures and shed their line numbers. --ESR]

**BiCapitalization** /n./

The act said to have been performed on trademarks (such as PostScript, NeXT, NeWS, VisiCalc, FrameMaker, TK!solver, EasyWriter) that have been raised above the ruck of common coinage by nonstandard capitalization..

**big win** /n./

Serendipity. "Yes, those two physicists discovered high-temperature superconductivity in a batch of ceramic that had been prepared incorrectly according to their experimental schedule. Small mistake; big win!" See win big.

**bigot** /n./ A person who is religiously attached to a particular computer, language, operating system, editor, or other tool (see religious issues). Usually found with a specifier; thus, `cray bigot', `ITS bigot', `APL bigot', `VMS bigot', `Berkeley bigot'. Real bigots can be distinguished from mere partisans or zealots by the fact that they refuse to learn alternatives even when the march of time and/or technology is threatening to obsolete the favored tool. It is truly said "You can tell a bigot, but you can't tell him much."

**bits** /pl.n./

1. Information. Examples: "I need some bits about file formats." ("I need to

know about file formats.") Compare core dump, sense 4. 2. Machine-readable representation of a document, specifically as contrast  ally, the opposite of `real computer' (see Get a real computer!). See also mess-dos, toaster, and toy.

**blue box**

/n./ 1. obs. Before all-digital switches made it possible for the phone companies to move them out of band, one could actually hear the switching tones used to route long-distance calls. Early phreakers built devices called `blue boxes' that could reproduce these tones, which could be used to commandeer portions of the phone network.

**= C =**

**C** /n./

1. The name of a programming language designed by Dennis Ritchie during the early 1970s and immediately used to reimplement Unix; so called because many features derived from an earlier compiler named `B' in commemoration of its parent, BCPL.

**= D =**

**dark-side hacker** /n./ A criminal or malicious hacker; a cracker. From George Lucas's Darth Vader, "seduced by the dark side of the Force".

***Ant.*** samurai.

**dead** /adj./

1. Non-functional; down; crashed. Especially used of hardware.

2. Useless; inaccessible.

Ant.: `live'.

**dead code** /n./

Routines that can never be accessed because all calls to them have been removed, or code that cannot be reached because it is guarded by a control structure that provably must always transfer control somewhere else. The presence of dead code may reveal either logical errors due to alterations in the program or significant changes in the assumptions and environment of the program

Syn. grunge.

**deadlock** /n./

1. [techspeak] A situation wherein two or more processes are unable to proceed because each is waiting for one of the others to do something.

Also used of deadlock-like interactions between humans.

Same as deadlock, though usually used only when exactly two processes are involved. This is the more popular term in Europe, while deadlock predominates in the United States.

**= E =**

**elegant** /adj./ [from mathematical usage] Combining simplicity, power, and a certain ineffable grace of design. Higher praise than `clever', `winning', or even cuspy.

**elite** /adj./ Clueful. Plugged-in. One of the cognoscenti. Also used as a general positive adjective. This term is not actually hacker slang in the strict sense; it is used primarily by crackers and warez d00dz. Cracker usage is probably related to a 19200cps modem called the `Courier Elite' that was widely popular on pirate elder days.

**email** /ee'mayl/ (also written `e-mail' and `E-mail') 1. /n./ Electronic mail automatically passed through computer networks and/or via modems over common-carrier lines. Contrast snail-mail, paper-net, voice-net. See etwork

address. 2. /vt./ To send electronic mail. Oddly enough, the word `emailed' is actually listed in the OED; it means "embossed (with a raised pattern) or perh. arranged in a net or open work". A use from 1480 is given. The word is probably derived from French `'emaill'e' (enameled) and related to Old French `emmaille"ure' (network). A French correspondent tells us that in modern French, `email' is a hard enamel obtained by heating special paints in a furnace; an `emailleur' (no final e) is a craftsman who makes email (he generally paints some objects (like, say, jewelry) and cooks them in a furnace).

There are numerous spelling variants of this word. In Internet traffic up to 1995, `email' predominates, `e-mail' runs a not-too-distant second, and `E-mail' and `Email' are a distant third and fourth.

**= G =**

**gen** /jen/ /n.,v./ Short for generate, used frequently in both spoken and written contexts.

**generate** /vt./ To produce something according to an algorithm or program or set of rules, or as a (possibly unintended) side effect of the execution of an algorithm or program.

 Ant. parse.

**Gosperism** /gos'p\*r-izm/ /n./ A hack, invention, or saying due to arch-hacker R. William (Bill) Gosper. Many of the entries in HAKMEM are Gosperisms.

grilf // /n./

Girlfriend. Like newsfroup and filk, a typo reincarnated as a new word. Seems to

have originated sometime in 1992 on Usenet.

**= H =**

**hack**

1. /n./ Originally, a quick job that produces what is needed, but not well.

2. /n./ An incredibly good, and perhaps very time-consuming, piece of work that produces exactly what is needed.

3. /vt./ To bear emotionally or physically. "I can't hack this heat!"

4. /vt./ To work on something (typically a program).

E.g.: "What are you doing?" "I'm hacking TECO."

5. /vi./ To interact with a computer in a playful and exploratory rather than goal-directed way.

E.g.:"Whatcha up to?" "Oh, just hacking."

6. /n./ Short for hacker.

**`happy hacking'** (a farewell), **`how's hacking?'** (a friendly greeting among hackers) and **`hack, hack'** (a fairly content-free but friendly comment, often used as a temporary farewell).

**hack mode** /n./

1. What one is in when hacking.

2. More specifically, a Zen-like state of total focus on The Problem that may be achieved when one is hacking (this is why every good hacker is part mystic). Ability to enter such concentration at will correlates strongly with wizardliness; it is one of the most important skills learned during larval stage. Sometimes amplified as `deep hack mode'.

**hack on** /vt./ To hack; implies that the subject is some pre-existing hunk of code that one is evolving, as opposed to something one might hack up.

**hack together** /vt./ To throw something together so it will work. Unlike `kluge together' or cruft together, this does not necessarily have negative connotations.

**hack up** /vt./ To hack, but generally implies that the result is a hack in sense 1 (a quick hack). Contrast this with hack on. To `hack up on' implies a quick-and-dirty modification to an existing system. Contrast hacked up; compare kluge up, monkey up, cruft together.

**hack value** /n./ Often adduced as the reason or motivation for expending effort toward a seemingly useless goal, the point being that the accomplished goal is a hack.

For example, MacLISP had features for reading and printing Roman numerals, which were installed purely for hack value. See display hack for one method of computing hack value, but this cannot really be explained, only experienced. As Louis Armstrong once said when asked to explain jazz: "Man, if you gotta ask you'll never know." (Feminists please note Fats Waller's explanation of rhythm:

"Lady, if you got to ask, you ain't got it.")

**hacker** /n./ [originally, someone who makes furniture with an axe]

1. A person who enjoys exploring the details of programmable systems and how to stretch their capabilities, as opposed to most users, who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary.

2. One who programs enthusiastically (even obsessively) or who enjoys programming rather than just theorizing about programming.

3. A person capable of appreciating hack value.

4. A person who is good at programming quickly.

5. An expert at a particular program, or one who frequently does work using it or on it; as in `a Unix hacker'.

6. An expert or enthusiast of any kind. One might be an astronomy hacker, for example.

7. One who enjoys the intellectual challenge of creatively overcoming or circumventing limitations.

8. [deprecated] A malicious meddler who tries to discover sensitive information by poking around. Hence `password hacker', `network hacker'. The correct term for this sense is cracker.

The term `hacker' also tends to connote membership in the global community defined by the net (see network, the and Internet address). It also implies that the person described is seen to subscribe to some version of the hacker ethic (see hacker ethic).

It is better to be described as a hacker by others than to describe oneself that way. Hackers consider themselves something of an elite (a meritocracy based on ability), though one to which new members are gladly welcome. There is thus a certain ego satisfaction to be had in identifying yourself as a hacker (but if you claim to be one and are not, you'll quickly be labeled bogus).

**hacker ethic** /n./

1. The belief that information-sharing is a powerful positive good, and that it is an ethical duty of hackers to share their expertise by writing free software and facilitating access to information and to computing resources wherever possible.

2. The belief that system-cracking for fun and exploration is ethically OK as long as the cracker commits no theft, vandalism, or breach of confidentiality.

**hacker humor** A distinctive style of shared intellectual humor found among hackers.

**hacking run** /n./ A hack session extended long outside normal working times, especially one longer than 12 hours.

**Hacking X for Y** /n./ [ITS] Ritual phrasing of part of the information which ITS made publicly available about each user. This information (the INQUIR record) was a sort of form in which the user could fill out various fields. On display, two of these fields were always combined into a project description of the form "Hacking X for Y" (e.g., "Hacking perceptrons for Minsky"). This form of description became traditional and has since been carried over to other systems with more general facilities for self-advertisement.

**Hackintosh** /n./ 1. An Apple Lisa that has been hacked into emulating a Macintosh (also called a `Mac XL'). 2. A Macintosh assembled from parts theoretically belonging to different models in the line.

**hackish** /hak'ish/ /adj./ (also **hackishness** n.) 1. Said of something that is or involves a hack. 2. Of or pertaining to hackers or the hacker subculture.

**hackishness** /n./

The quality of being or involving a hack. This term is considered mildly silly.

Syn. ***hackitude.***

**hackitude** /n./

Syn. ***hackishness***; this word is considered sillier.

**HAKMEM** /hak'mem/ /n./ A 6-letterism for `hacks memo'A legendary collection of neat mathematical and programming hacks contributed by many people at MIT and elsewhere.

**hakspek** /hak'speek/ /n./ A shorthand method of spelling found on many British academic bulletin boards and talker systems. Syllables and whole words in a sentence are replaced by single ASCII characters the names of which are phonetically similar or equivalent, while multiple letters are usually dropped. Hence, `for' becomes `4'; `two', `too', and `to' become `2'; `ck' becomes `k'. "Before I see you tomorrow" becomes "b4 i c u 2moro". First appeared in London about 1986, and was probably caused by the slowness of available talker systems, which operated on archaic machines with outdated operating systems and no standard methods of communication. Has become rarer since. See also talk mode.

**hand-hacking** /n./

1. The practice of translating hot spots from an HLL into hand-tuned assembler, as opposed to trying to coerce the compiler into generating better code. Both the term and the practice are becoming uncommon. See tune, bum, by hand; syn. with /v./ cruft.

2. More generally, manual construction or patching of data sets that would normally be generated by a translation utility and interpreted by another program, and aren't really designed to be read or modified by humans.

**haque** /hak/ /n./

[Usenet] Variant spelling of hack, used only for the noun form and connoting an elegant hack.

**hardwarily** /hard-weir'\*-lee/ /adv./

In a way pertaining to hardware. E.g.:"The system is hardwarily unreliable." The adjective `hardwary' is not traditionally used.

**HLL** /H-L-L/ /n./ [High-Level Language] Found primarily in email and news rather than speech. Rarely, the variants **`VHLL'** and **`MLL'** are found. **VHLL** stands for `Very-High-Level Language' and is used to describe Standard English that the speaker happens to like; Prolog and

Backus's FP are often called VHLLs. **`MLL'** stands for `Medium-Level Language' and is sometimes used half-jokingly to describe C, alluding to its `structured-assembler' image.

**= I =**

**IBM** /I-B-M/ Inferior But Marketable; It's Better Manually; Insidious Black Magic; It's Been Malfunctioning; Incontinent Bowel Movement; and a near- infinite number of even less complimentary expansions, including `International Business Machines'. These abbreviations illustrate the considerable antipathy most hackers have long felt toward the `industry leader'. What galls hackers about most IBM machines above the PC level isn't so much that they are underpowered and overpriced (though that does count against them), but that the designs are incredibly archaic and one can't fix them -- source code is locked up tight, and programming tools are expensive, hard to find.

**IBM discount** /n./ A price increase. Outside IBM, this derives from the common perception that IBM products are generally overpriced.

**INTERCAL** /in't\*r-kal/ /n./ [`Compiler Language With No Pronounceable Acronym'] A computer language designed by Don Woods and James Lyons in 1972. INTERCAL is purposely different from all other computer languages in all ways but one; it is purely a written language, being totally unspeakable.

**Internet** /n./ The mother of all networks, that absorbed into itself many of the proprietary networks built during the second wave of wide-area networking after 1980. It is now a commonplace even in mainstream media to predict that a globally-extended Internet will become the key unifying communications technology of the next century

**Internet address** /n./ [techspeak] An absolute network address of the form foo@bar.baz, where foo is a user name, bar is a sitename, and baz is a `domain' name, possibly including periods itself.

2. More loosely, any network address reachable through Internet; this includes bang path addresses and some internal corporate and government networks.

**ITS** /I-T-S/ /n./ 1. Incompatible Time-sharing System, an influential though highly idiosyncratic operating system written at MIT and long used at the MIT AI Lab. Much AI-hacker jargon derives from ITS folklore, and to have been `an ITS hacker' qualifies one instantly as an old-timer of the most venerable sort. ITS pioneered many important innovations, including transparent file sharing between machines and terminal-independent I/O.

**= K =**

**k-** /pref./ Extremely. Not commonly used among hackers, but quite common among crackers and warez d00dz in compounds such as `k-kool' /K'kool'/, `k-rad' /K'rad'/, and `k-awesome' /K'aw`sm/. Also used to intensify negatives; thus, `k-evil', `k-lame', `k-screwed', and `k-annoying'.

**= L =**

**lamer** /n./ [prob. originated in skateboarder slang] Synonym for luser, not used much by hackers but common among warez d00dz, crackers, and phreakers. A lamer is one who scams codes off others rather than doing cracks or really understanding the fundamental concepts.

***Ant.***elite.

**=M=**

**marketroid** /mar'k\*-troyd/ /n./ alt. **`marketing slime', `marketeer', `marketing droid', `marketdroid'**. A member of a company's marketing department, esp. one who promises users that the next version of a product will have features that are not actually scheduled for inclusion, are extremely difficult to implement, and/or are in violation of the laws of physics.

**= N =**

**naive user** /n./ A luser. Tends to imply someone who is ignorant mainly owing to inexperience..When this is applied to someone who has experience, there is a definite implication of stupidity.

**neat hack** /n./

1. A clever technique. 2. A brilliant practical joke, where neatness is

correlated with cleverness, harmlessness, and surprise value.

**net.**- /net dot/ /pref./ [Usenet] Prefix used to describe people and events related to Usenet.

E.g.: `net.goddesses' (various charismatic net.women with circles of on-line admirers).

**net.personality** /net per`sn-al'-\*-tee/ /n./ Someone who has made a name for him or herself on Usenet, through either longevity or attention-getting posts, but doesn't meet the other requirements of net.godhood.

**net.police** /net-p\*-lees'/ /n./ (var. `net.cops') Those Usenet readers who feel it is their responsibility to pounce on and flame any posting which they regard as offensive or in violation of their understanding of netiquette. Generally used sarcastically or pejoratively. Also spelled `net police'. See also net.-, code police.

**network**, the /n./ 1. The union of all the major noncommercial, academic, and hacker-oriented networks, such as Internet, the pre-1990 ARPANET, NSFnet, BITNET, and the virtual UUCP and Usenet `networks'. A site is generally considered **`on the network'** if it can be reached through some combination of Internet-style (@-sign) addresses.

**NIL** /nil/ No. Used in reply to a question, particularly one asked using the `-P' convention.

**NSP** /N-S-P/ /n./ Common abbreviation for `Network Service Provider', one of the big national or regional companies that maintains a portion of the Internet backbone and resells connectivity to ISPs. In 1996, major NSPs include ANS, MCI, UUNET, and Sprint.

**number-crunching** /n./ Computations of a numerical nature, esp. those that make extensive use of floating-point numbers. This term is in widespread informal use outside hackerdom and even in mainstream slang.

**= O =**

**OS** /O-S/

1. [Operating System] /n./ An abbreviation heavily used in email, occasionally in speech.

**= P =**

**P-mail** /n./ Physical mail, as opposed to email.

Syn. snail-mail, but less common.

**Pascal** /n./ An Algol-descended language designed by Niklaus Wirth on the CDC 6600 around 1967--68 as an instructional tool for elementary programming.

The hackish point of view on Pascal was probably best summed up by a devastating 1981 paper by Brian Kernighan (of K&R fame) entitled "Why Pascal is Not My Favorite Programming Language", which was turned down by the technical journals but circulated widely through photocopies.

**= S =**

**samurai** /n./ A hacker who hires out for legal cracking.

**sitename** /si:t'naym/ /n./ [Unix/Internet] The unique electronic name of a computer system, used to identify it in UUCP mail, Usenet, or other forms of electronic information interchange. The folklore interest of sitenames stems from the creativity and humor they often display.

**sneaker /n./** An individual hired to break into places in order to test their security; analogous to tiger team. Compare samurai

**= T =**

**T** /T/ 1. [from LISP terminology for `true'] Yes. Used in reply to a question (particularly one asked using The `-P' convention). In LISP, the constant T means `true'. Some Lisp hackers use `T' and `NIL' instead of `Yes' and `No'.

2.A dialect of LISP developed at Yale.

**talk mode** /n./ A feature supported by Unix, ITS, and some other OSes that allows two or more logged-in users to set up a real-time on-line conversation. It combines the immediacy of talking with all the precision and verbosity that written language entails.

**talker system** /n./ British hackerism for software that enables talk mode.

**= U =**

**UN\*X** /n./ Used to refer to the Unix operating system (a trademark of AT&T) in writing.

**Unix** /yoo'niks/ /n./ (also `UNIX') An interactive time-sharing system invented in 1969 by Ken Thompson after Bell Labs left the Multics project, originally so he could play games on his PDP-7. Dennis Ritchie, the inventor of C, is considered a co-author of the system. Unix underwent mutations and expansions at the hands of many people, resulting in a uniquely flexible and developer-friendly environment. By 1991, Unix had become the most widely used multiuser general-purpose operating system in the world. Many people consider this the most important victory yet of hackerdom over industry opposition.

Both forms `UNIX' and `Unix' are common, and used interchangeably.

**Unix brain damage** /n./ Something that has to be done to break a network program (typically a mailer) on a non-Unix system so that it will interoperate with Unix systems. The hack may qualify as `Unix brain damage' if the program conforms to published standards and the Unix program does not. **Unix weenie** /n./ [ITS] 1. A derogatory play on `Unix wizard', common among hackers who use Unix by necessity but would prefer alternatives.

**unixism** /n./ A piece of code or a coding technique that depends on the protected multi-tasking environment with relatively low process-spawn overhead that exists on virtual-memory Unix systems.

**= V =**

**VAX** /vaks/ /n./ 1. [from Virtual Address eXtension] The most successful minicomputer design in industry history, possibly excepting its immediate ancestor, the PDP-11. Between its release in 1978 and its eclipse by killer micros after about 1986, the VAX was probably the hacker's favorite machine of them all. Esp. noted for its large, assembler-programmer-friendly instruction set -- an asset that became a liability after the RISC revolution.

**VAXectomy** /vak-sek't\*-mee/ /n./ [by analogy with `vasectomy'] A VAX removal.

**VAXen** /vak'sn/ /n./ [from `oxen', perhaps influenced by `vixen'] (alt. `vaxen') The plural canonically used among hackers for the DEC VAX computers. "Our installation has four PDP-10s and twenty vaxen."

**vgrep** /vee'grep/ /v.,n./ Visual grep. The operation of finding patterns in a file optically rather than digitally (also called an `optical grep').

**vi** /V-I/, not /vi:/ and never /siks/ /n./ [from `Visual Interface'] A screen editor crufted together by Bill Joy for an early BSD release. Became the de facto standard Unix editor and a nearly undisputed hacker favorite outside of MIT until the rise of EMACS after about 1984.

**voice** /vt./ To phone someone, as opposed to emailing them or connecting in talk mode. "I'm busy now; I'll voice you later."

**voice-net** /n./ Hackish way of referring to the telephone system, analogizing it to a digital network. Usenet sig blocks not uncommonly include the sender's phone next to a "Voice:" or "Voice-Net:" header; common variants of this are "Voicenet" and "V-Net". Compare paper-net, snail-mail.

**= W =**

**WAITS** /wayts/ /n./ The mutant cousin of TOPS-10 used on a handful of systems at SAIL up to 1990. There was never an `official' expansion of WAITS (the name itself having been arrived at by a rather sideways process), but it was frequently glossed as `West-coast Alternative to ITS'. Though WAITS was less visible than ITS, there was frequent exchange of people and ideas between the two communities, and innovations pioneered at WAITS exerted enormous indirect influence.

**war dialer** /n./ A cracking tool, a program that calls a given list or range of phone numbers and records those which answer with handshake tones (and so might be entry points to computer or telecommunications systems). Some of these programs have become quite sophisticated, and can now detect modem, fax, or PBX tones and log each one separately. The war dialer is one of the most important tools in the phreaker's kit. These programs evolved from early demon dialers.

**warez** /weirz/ /n./ Widely used in cracker subcultures to denote cracked version of commercial software, that is versions from which copy-protection has been stripped. Hackers recognize this term but don't use it themselves. **warez d00dz** /weirz doodz/ /n./ A substantial subculture of crackers refer to themselves as `warez d00dz'. Warez d00dz get illegal copies of copyrighted software. If it has copy protection on it, they break the protection so the software can be copied. Then they distribute it around the world via several gateways.

The contrast with Internet hackers is stark and instructive.

**Weenix** /wee'niks/ /n./ [ITS] A derogatory term for Unix, derived from Unix weenie. According to one noted ex-ITSer, it is "the operating system preferred by Unix Weenies: typified by poor modularity, poor reliability, hard file deletion, no file version numbers, case sensitivity everywhere, and users who believe that these are all advantages".

**whacker** /n./ [University of Maryland: from hacker] 1. A person, similar to a hacker, who enjoys exploring the details of programmable systems and how to stretch their capabilities. Whereas a hacker tends to produce great hacks, a whacker only ends up whacking the system or program in question.

2.A person who is good at programming quickly, though rather poorly.

**win** [MIT] 1. /vi./ To succeed. A program wins if no unexpected conditions arise. 2. /n./ Success, or a specific instance thereof, a pleasing outcome. "What a win!" Emphatic forms: **`moby win', `super win', `hyper-win'** (often used interjectively as a reply). **`Suitable win'** is also common at MIT, usually in reference to a satisfactory solution to a problem.

Ant.: ***lose***

**win big** /vi./ To experience serendipity. "I went shopping and won big; there was a 2-for-1 sale."

**win win** /excl./ Expresses pleasure at a win.

**winnage** /win'\*j/ /n./ The situation when a lossage is corrected, or when something is winning.

**winner** 1. /n./ An unexpectedly good situation, program, programmer, or person. 2. `real winner': Often sarcastic, but also used as high praise. "He's a real winner -- never reports a bug till he can duplicate it and send in an example."

**winnitude** /win'\*-t[y]ood/ /n./ The quality of winning (as opposed to winnage, which is the result of winning).

**= X =**

**X** /X/ /n./ 1. Used in various speech and writing contexts in roughly its algebraic sense of `unknown within a set defined by context'. Thus, the abbreviation 680x0 stands for 68000, 68010, 68020, 68030, or 68040, and 80x86 stands for 80186, 80286 80386 or 80486.

2. [after the name of an earlier window system called `W'] An over-sized and over-complicated window system developed at MIT and widely used on Unix systems.

**xref** /X'ref/ /v.,n./ Hackish standard abbreviation for `cross-reference'.

**XXX** /X-X-X/ /n./ A marker that attention is needed. Commonly used in program comments to indicate areas that are kluged up or need to be.

**Appendix**

***Poe Revisited, Computer Style***

Once upon a midnight dreary, fingers cramped and vision bleary,

System manuals piled high and wasted paper on the floor

Longing for the warmth of bed sheets,

Still I sat there, doing spreadsheets;

Having reached the bottom line,

I took a floppy from the drawer.

Typing with a steady hand, then invoked the SAVE command

But I got a reprimand: it read "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

Was this some occult illusion? Some maniacal intrusion?

These were choices Solomon himself had never faced before.

Carefully, I weighed my options.

These three seemed to be the top ones.

Clearly I must now adopt one:

Choose "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

With my fingers pale and trembling,

Slowly toward the keyboard bending,

Longing for a happy ending, hoping all would be restored,

Praying for some guarantee

Finally I pressed a key--

But on the screen what did I see?

Again: "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

I tried to catch the chips off-guard--

I pressed again, but twice as hard.

Luck was just not in the cards.

I saw what I had seen before.

Now I typed in desperation

Trying random combinations

Still there came the incantation:

Choose: "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

There I sat, distraught, exhausted, by my own machine accosted

Getting up I turned away and paced across the office floor.

And then I saw an awful sight:

A bold and blinding flash of light--

A lightning bolt had cut the night and shook me to my very core.

I saw the screen collapse and die

"Oh no--my data base," I cried

I thought I heard a voice reply,

"You'll see your data Nevermore!"

To this day I do not know

The place to which lost data goes

I bet it goes to heaven where the angels have it stored

But as for productivity, well

I fear that IT goes straight to hell

And that's the tale I have to tell

Your choice: "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

**TV Typewriters A Tale of Hackish Ingenuity**

Here is a true story: One day an MIT hacker was in a motorcycle accident and broke his leg. He had to stay in the hospital quite a while, and got restless because he couldn't hack. Two of his friends therefore took a terminal and a modem for it to the hospital, so that he could use the computer by telephone from his hospital bed.

Now this happened some years before the spread of home сomputers, and computer terminals were not a familiar sight to the average person. When the two friends got to the hospital, a guard stopped them and asked what they were carrying.

They explained that they wanted to take a computer terminal to their friend who was a patient. The guard took out his list of things that patients were permitted to have in their rooms: TV, radio, electric razor, typewriter, tape player, ... no computer terminals. Computer terminals weren't on the list, so the guard wouldn't let it in. Rules are rules, you know.

Fair enough, said the two friends, and they left again. They were frustrated, of course, because they knew that the terminal was as harmless as a TV or anything else on the list which gave them an idea. The next day they returned, and the same thing happened: a guard stopped them and asked what they were carrying. They said: "This is a TV typewriter!" The guard was skeptical, so they plugged it in and demonstrated it. "See? You just type on the keyboard and what you type shows up on the TV screen." Now the guard didn't stop to think about how utterly useless a typewriter would be that didn't produce any paper copies of what you typed; but this was clearly a TV typewriter, no doubt about it. So he checked his list: "A TV is all right, a typewriter is all right ... okay, take it on in!"

Historical note: Many years ago, "Popular Electronics" published solder-it-yourself plans for a TV typewriter. Despite the essential uselessness of the device, it was an enormously popular project. Steve Ciarcia, the man behind "Byte" magazine's "Circuit Cellar" feature, resurrected this ghost in one of his books of the early 1980s. He ascribed its popularity (no doubt correctly) to the feeling of power the builder could achieve by being able to decide himself what would be shown on the TV.

Antihistorical note: On September 23rd, 1992, the L.A. Times ran the following bit of filler: Solomon Waters of Altadena, a 6-year-old first-grader, came home from his first day of school and excitedly told his mother how he had written on "a machine that looks like a computer -- but without the TV screen." She asked him if it could have been a "typewriter." "Yeah! Yeah!" he said. "That's what it was called."