

Re: meaning of tingo

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- *From:* Harlan Messinger <hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx>
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benlizross wrote:

retrosorter wrote:

I just finished browsing through a book entitled "The Meaning of Tingo and other extraordinary words from around the world" by Adam Jacot de Boinod and was immediately struck by some errors he has committed. For example, he states "The French invented the word ordinateur supposedly in order to avoid using the first two syllables of the word computer (con is slang for vagina and pute for whore)." This claim is utter rubbish. He also defines the Yiddish/Hebrew "tsuris" as "grief and trouble from a child," but the term is definitely not restricted or even primarily related to children as in the word "nakhes."

Just to take your two examples: I'm not sure how you could establish that the "con/pute" story was "utter rubbish". Con and pute do exist, and people do sometimes avoid words because of undesirable homophony.

I find it suspect anyway, because French has so many words that start with "con-" and "com-", not to mention venerable words like "réputé(e)", and has even countenanced "mariage putatif" (giggle, snort), so it's hard to believe that people would suddenly have found "computeur" to reek of vile connotations.

What you could do, though, is point out that this is part of a much larger pattern of creating French alternatives to avoid borrowing from English.

I'm hard pressed to come up with many modern examples. This is a language that has officially naturalized "cédérom" (yes, believe it).

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