

GLOSSERY

NYR INDICTOR

Chappaqua, New York

What do the following two alphabets have in common?

Amber, Bale, Chip, Dumbo, Eton, Foe, Gold, Ham, Illinois, —, Kola, Loga, Mayo, Nomad,
One, Pear, Quiche, Rajah, Sentinel, The, Uvea, Vale, Wares, —, Yay, —

Adele, Bo, Cora, Dan, Esmeralda, Fanya, Goliath, Hallam, Idi, Jen, Kim, Linda, Meriam,
Nicola, Oneida, Pam, Quinault, Ron, Santa, Tina, Ura, Vedda, Wallace, —, Yuri, Zaza

(I regret that I have been unable to think of suitable examples beginning with J, X and Z in both lists, but this fact has nothing to do with the logic behind these lists.)

The answer is that all words in both lists are names of languages, according to Merritt Ruhlen's *A Guide to the World's Languages. Vol. 1: Classification* (Stanford University Press, 1987). That impressive work lists "roughly 5,000" languages, and provides a complete taxonomic classification for all the known languages. Ruhlen systematically avoids variant spellings as well as dialect names, which would bring the total number of terms to "more than 25,000". Most of these terms can be found in C.F. and F.M. Vogelin's *Classification and Index of the World's Languages*, or Barbara F. Grimes' *Index to the Tenth Edition of Ethnologue: Languages of the World*.

If we admit that the words FRENCH, SPANISH, etc. are legitimate English words, then all of the other 25,000+ words, from ABAGA to ZWARA, may also be considered English, although some of these words are very rare. Seekers of the elusive 26-letter pangram may find inspiration in language names like UBYX, QXU, MZAB and JINGHPAW. Languages like URUNAMACAN and WARNDARANG add to the corpus of acceptable members of a ten-by-ten word square. The following brief conversation consists only of language names from Ruhlen's index:

Santa: So, shall the ham quiche be pale gold, Dumbo?

Dumbo: The ham quiche shall be pale gold, Santa.

Santa: Yay!

It should be not too hard to extend this a bit, but there are, for some reason, very few languages whose names are homographs of English verbs (except CHIP, CROW, DYE, and, of course, POLISH).