

## English Language students piecing together the jigsaw of jargon



A Level English Language students have been studying the topic of Language and Occupational Groups. In their examination, they are required to write an article in which they have to explain an aspect of language use for a non-specialist audience. This is their response to this task. We hope you enjoy reading about this fascinating area of language use.

### **The ultimate guide to ‘getting jiggy with the jargon’**

We have all been told that being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills. This is particularly important in the workplace. Have you ever wondered why we only hear certain words and phrases in certain places? Consider the following examples: “Cabin crew, seats for landing” and “This delay is due to points failure at Bristol.” Some words only make sense in the context of the workplace. They are examples of jargon. Jargon refers to the specialised terminology associated with a particular occupational group. It means that communications may be particularly efficient for people within the same profession as well as ensuring that those who are not members of a specific societal group remain anything but privy to the information being shared. The specialised vocabulary enables for this ‘verbal shorthand’ to significantly quicken interactions. Between various verb choices, numerous nouns and a plethora of phrases, the scope of a single social group’s jargon runs far and wide. In simple terms, jargon can be understood as a form of technical slang that is used to include members of a group and exclude those who are outside the group.

The word ‘jargon’ might sound modern and whizzy, but it is nothing new. The etymology of the word ‘jargon’ itself is of Old French descent. The original word ‘jargoun’ means ‘twittering’.

According to University of Bergamo professor, Maurizio Gotti, the word appeared in the English language through Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Today, jargon is used almost everywhere. You might be using it yourself. We subconsciously use words which only make sense in a social group. Jargon is used by people who work in the same trade or people who have common interests; for example, people in professions such as health/medicine and law.

Legal jargon is in reference to the specialized language that is commonly used within the legal profession. It includes complex vocabulary, Latinate phrases, and technical terms that are often difficult for non-lawyers to understand for the sake of privacy and security. The use of jargon in legal practice has its origins in historical traditions, the need for precision, and the desire to maintain professionalism. After all, the use of legal jargon can also make the legal system appear inaccessible and confusing to people who aren't in the legal profession. Latin phrases can be seen within a legal language such as, 'Pro bono' - the provision of legal services without charge, typically to individuals or organizations that cannot afford to pay for legal representation. 'Res judicata' is a legal doctrine that prevents a case from being re-litigated once a final judgment has been rendered, and 'De facto' which is a Latin term that refers to something that exists in fact, but not necessarily by law. So, next time you find yourself bamboozled by the barrister, that's just their way of reassuring you of their occupational trustworthiness.

Language within the occupational setting of schools is naturally different as children try to fit in according to their surroundings. In the secondary school environment, the majority of their language adaptations occur due to the wide variety of unfamiliar faces and aspects of new accents and dialects. Fear not, this is perfectly normal. As humans, we have evolved to become part of 'cliques' in order to fit in. We automatically change our language in subtle ways; this can include changing our accent and language use to embrace people we want to befriend. We may adopt different jargon and form our own exclusive groups. This is called 'convergence', which is a strategy employed by individuals to mirror language and reduce social differences. This can help you win friends and influence people in the workplace.

So, for all aspiring business apprentices, try to brush up on the buzzwords of corporate language. Are you ready for lingo bingo? UPT, transfer, conversion, profit, target, concession. The message is: get ahead in the workplace by getting your head around the puzzle of professional communications.

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