gobbledygook

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn some jargon to be used or avoided in meetings. Learn some new phrasal verbs and practice using them. Comprehension activities and

Activity One: Ask and answer with your teacher.

1. What do you think the following words mean? - jargon, nonsense, gobbledygook, tripe, rubbish, waffle, flimflam?
2. Do you notice that people in your company use complicated words or jargon?
3. Do you struggle to understand some of this jargon?
4. Do you dare to ask when you don't understand something?
5. Who tends to use the most of this complicated language in your opinion?
6. Why do people use such jargon?



Activity Two: New words and new phrasal verbs.

Jargon is a good example of how new words are constantly coming into our language. Sometimes this is in response new new technology or changes in society, sometimes to concepts that 'go viral'. 'New' phrasal verbs are usually in fact new combinations of existing verbs or imitations of phrasal verbs which already exist, or else new uses for existing phrasal verbs. This can make it complicated to understand their use and it's important to pay attention to the context. You should really try to note down any new phrasal verbs and do some research to figure out what they mean. Here are some examples of such verbs evolving:

An error message appeared and I was **bumped off** the Net. There's a problem with a virus and you get **bumped off** after a few minutes of being online.

bump off *informal*

1 [often passive] to murder someone = DO IN, KILL

be bumped off *He was scared of being bumped off.*
bump off sb *also* **bump sb off** *He's the guy who bumped off the professor.* ♦ *She paid someone to bump him off.*

2 [usually passive] if you are bumped off a computer system, you can no longer use the Internet because the connection with your computer is suddenly broken

be/get bumped off *If you don't have the right software installed, you may be bumped off the system.* ♦ *I got bumped off my connection while I was trying to reserve a flight.*

This use of **bump off** refers to the situation where the connection between a person's computer and the Internet is broken. **A new meaning of the phrasal verb has been born,** so the dictionary entry now shows two meanings.

One reason why we can find new phrasal verbs is because people are looking for words to say exactly what they mean in a certain situation. A famous chef once said that she was '**all reciped out'** and had decided to retire from TV cocking shows. As we understand the phrasal verbs 'worn out' or 'tired out' then we could understand what she meant.

We can make a mental association between the idea of being exhausted and the use of the particle **out**, especially in the pattern: **-ed** (past participle) **+ out**

This enables us to create new expressions by using **out** with a 'new' verb form, usually one that has been formed from a noun (such as **recipe**). Here are some other examples:

partied out	('tired of going to parties, because you have been to so many')
conferenced out	('tired of going to conferences')
barbecued out	('tired of eating barbecue food')

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To give another example, the recent phrasal verb **sex** something **up** means 'to change something in order to make it seem more interesting, exciting, or important'. It is used in sentences like this:
He deliberately **sexed up** the report so that they would pay more attention to his ideas.

Some speakers and writers now use the expression 'to **sex** something ***down***' to refer to the process of making something seem *less* interesting or exciting.

Preparing for something by gathering things or people together. This meaning is reflected in phrasal verbs like **stock up**. Following patterns like let's get **stocked up** for the winter, new combinations often occur in the structure get **-ed up**, as in the example **get lawyered up**: We need to **get lawyered up** if we want to claim our money back.

Source: http://macmillandictionaries.com/MED-Magazine/March2006/36-Phrasal-Verbs-New.htm#2

What do you think the following phrasal verbs mean?

To zero in on

To spell something out

To put something off

To think something through

To roll something out

To go after something

To go over something

To call something off

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1. Try using the above phrasal verbs in a sentence.
2. Have you come across any phrasal verbs recently which were new to you?
3. What do you know about the history of phrasal verbs and why they are important?
4. Try making new ones like them if you can!

Activity Three: Jargon. Reading comprehension and pre-reading activity.
Read the Article about Jargon and answer the questions which follow. *Try to use the words in bold in another sentence which you prepare before reading the article for your homework.* Source - The Economist - https://www.economist.com/business/2021/07/31/why-businesses-use-so-much-jargon

No child aspires to a life talking the kind of nonsense that many executives speak. But it seems that, as soon as managers start to climb the corporate ladder, they begin to lose the ability to talk or write clearly. They instead become entangled in a forest of gobbledygook.

The first explanation for this phenomenon is that "jargon abhors a vacuum". All too often, executives know they have nothing significant to say in a speech or a memo. They could confine their remarks to something like "profits are up (or down)", which would be relevant information. But executives would rather make some grand statement about team spirit or the corporate **ethos**. They aim to make the business sound more inspirational than "selling more stuff at less cost". So they use long words, obscure jargon, and buzzwords like "holistic" to fill the space.

Another reason why managers indulge in waffle relates to the nature of the modern economy. In the past, work was **largely** about producing, or selling, physical things such as bricks or electrical gadgets. A service-based economy involves tasks that are difficult to define. When it is hard to describe what you do, it is natural **to resort to** imprecise terms.

Such terms can have a purpose but still be irritating. Take "onboarding". A single word to describe the process of a company assimilating a new employee could be useful. But "to board" would **do the trick**. The only purpose of adding "on" seems to be to allow the creation of an equally ugly word, "offboarding", the process of leaving a firm.

Overblown language is also used when the actual business is **prosaic**. Private Eye, a British satirical magazine that often mocks corporate flimflam, used to have a regular column pointing out the absurd tendency of companies to tag the word "solutions" onto a product; carpets became "floor-covering solutions". (Bartleby has long wanted to start a business devoted to dissolving items in water so it could be called "Solution Solutions".) Nowadays, the target for mockery is the use of the term dna, as in "perfect customer service is in our dna".

In her book about life in the tech industry, "Uncanny Valley", Anna Wiener used the term "garbage language" to describe "a sort of nonlanguage which was neither beautiful nor especially efficient". Tech executives **spouted** a very grand vision of how they would reshape society but their rhetoric often clashed with the hard reality of what they were doing, which was to sell advertising or monopolise users' time.

The third reason why managers use jargon is to establish their credentials. What makes one person **fit to** manage another? It is hard to identify any obvious attributes; managers are not like doctors, who prove their expertise through passing exams and practical training. If you can speak the language of management, you appear qualified to rule. If others don't understand terms like "synergy" and "paradigm", that only demonstrates their ignorance. In a sense, managers are acting rather like medieval priests, who conducted services in Latin rather than in the local language, adding to the mystical nature of the process.

Once corporate jargon is established, it is hard for managers to avoid using it. The terms are ever-present in PowerPoint slides, speeches and annual reports. Not to use them would suggest a manager is not sufficiently committed to the job. Junior staff,

for their part, dare not question the language **for fear of** damaging their promotion prospects.

Of course, new words will inevitably be **coined** in the world of business, as in other areas of life. Technology has **ushered in** a range of terms, such as hardware and software, which were once unfamiliar but are now widely understood. But a lot of the more irritating jargon has been brought in from other areas of life, like the self-help movement.

All this matters because the continued use of obscure language is a sign that the speaker is not thinking clearly. And if those in charge aren't thinking clearly, that's bad for the business. People who are in real command of the detail are able to explain things in a way that is easily understood. And if a manager's colleagues understand the message, they are more likely to get the right things done. Jargon gets in the way.

1. What reasons are given in the article to explain why managers use jargon?
2. According to the article why is it bad to use jargon?

Activity Four: **Watch the video and answer the questions.** You may need to listen more than once as they are speaking quickly.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ab2ZeZ-krY

1. What is fluff jargon?
2. What's wrong with it?
3. What happens if you mash together too much corporate language?
4. What is gibberish?
5. What example was used of using complex language in government?
6. What do they mean when they talk about not reading the find print?
7. What's the flesch readability score?
8. How can corporate language hide dishonesty?

For further research https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/articles/beyond-a-movement/

Activity Five: Using the corporate BS generator https://www.atrixnet.com/bs-generator.html Say the following things in an unnecessarily complex way with lots of meaningless jargon.

1. I am satisfied with the progress we have made in this area.
2. We are committed to providing excellent services to our clients.
3. We need to avoid making more mistakes like this.
4. It will be difficult to respect the deadline if we don't have everyone's full support.
5. We must meet the deadline.

For more inspiration: http://www.andrewdavidson.com/gibberish/

Activity Six: Retail Jargon. (You can skip this activity if you don't work in the retail sector).

At home before the lesson read about the following terms and what they mean. Tell your teacher which you are familiar with and which are new to you.

Brick and Click

This term refers to retailers that integrate their brick and mortar store with their ecommerce site. These retailers bring the best of both worlds into their business. Most brick and click companies even offer seamless web-to-store services such as in-store pick ups and returns.

Cross Merchandising

This refers to the practice of displaying or putting together products from different categories to drive add-on sales. Picture this: You're at the grocery store browsing the liquor section when you see a pack of lemons tacked to the tequila shelf. This is cross merchandising in action. Groceries know that people often take lemons with their tequila shots, so they strategically placed the two items together.

Clienteling

This is a technique used by retail associates to deepen their relationship with each customer. Clienteling involves relationship-building activities such as using CRM software to collect and track customer data, providing personalized shopping experiences, and following up with shoppers in a relevant and timely way.

Dead Stock

Sometimes called dead inventory, this is one thing no retailer wants to have, ever. Dead stock pertains to merchandise that has never been sold or has been in stock for a while. Sometimes this is because a particular item is just seasonal, but other times it's because the product simply isn't in demand.

Retailers can get rid of dead or unmoving inventory through sales or donations, but the best way to deal with dead stock is not to have it in the first place. Analyze the demand in your market to determine the items that you should keep in stock. Also, be sure to manage your inventory well and keep communication lines open between your sales and your purchasing departments.

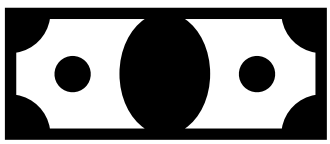
Etailing

Short for "Electronic Retailing", this is the practice of selling goods over the Internet. Etailers come in all shapes and sizes, from big name giants such as Amazon and Zappos to neighborhood mom & pop stores selling items on their website.

Endless Aisle

An endless aisle is a feature of brick-and-mortar stores that enables customers to browse and shop the retailer's entire catalog of products. So rather than stocking up on every item and SKU, you can implement an endless aisle by giving shoppers access to devices like touch screens and iPads.

One example of a retailer using endless aisles is Nike. Their store Pasadena CA has large touch screens that enable customers to browse the retailer's entire inventory. If they see something they like, the customer can purchase it in-store and Nike will ship the item to them.



High Speed Retail

Born out of people's need for faster services and less wait time, high speed retail is all about making the customer's shopping experience go by much quicker. Examples of High Speed Retail can include drive-thru grocery stores, pop-up stores, mobile businesses such as food trucks, or any retailer that implements urgent promotions or limited-time sales.

Internet of Things (IoT)

IoT is the concept of getting objects such as cars or household appliances to "talk" to each other. More and more things can now connect to the web, and this enables them to communicate with one another. Smartphones can connect to speakers, clocks, lamps, and more.How does this apply to retail? Forward-thinking retailers are now using connected devices to streamline in-store shopping and communicate with shoppers.

Omni-Channel Retailing

Consider this as the next generation of cross-channel and multi-channel retail. Omni-channel means establishing a presence on several channels and platforms (i.e. brick-and-mortar, mobile, online, catalog etc) and enabling customers to transact, interact, and engage across these channels simultaneously or even interchangeably.



Giving the customer the convenience and flexibility to purchase an item using your shopping app, and then letting them pick up the merchandise in your store, plus allowing them to process a return via your website, is an example of omni-channel retailing.

It's important to note that omni-channel goes beyond simply being on multiple channels or platforms. Just because you have a website, a mobile app, and a physical store doesn't necessarily mean that you're an omni-channel retailer. In order to truly be one, you must fuse all those channels together so they give customers a seamless experience.

Planogram

This is a visual representation that shows how merchandise should be arranged on store shelves in order to drive more sales. It's a model that indicates the best placement and positioning of your merchandise. Remember that product positioning can influence consumers' purchases, so planning how they're displayed and organized can maximize sales. Planograms can also guide and assist in store mapping and they enable retailers use space more effectively.

Pop-Up Store

Pop-Up-Stores are short-term shops or sales spaces that come and go within a given period. These stores can be set up in empty retail spaces, mall booths, or even in a park.

Relationship Retailing

This is a strategy that businesses implement to build loyalty and forge long-term relationships with customers. Relationship Retailing can come in the form of loyalty programs, personalized experiences, or superb customer service.

Social Commerce

S-Commerce refers to retail models or ecommerce practices that incorporate social media, user-generated content, or social interaction. Do note that the role of social networks like Facebook or Twitter in S-Commerce isn't necessarily to serve as platforms for buying and selling; rather, they're meant to assist the process and help drive sales.

Unified Brand Experience

In retail, this concept is all about establishing a consistent brand or identity throughout multiple channels or platforms, including brick-and-mortar, ecommerce, or mobile. So whether you're marketing and selling to customers face-to-face, on your mobile app, or doing it online, you'll be able to deliver the same messages and give them the same great experience. Successfully implementing this involves properly training your staff, investing in the right tools, and more importantly, having one clear strategy and message.

Webrooming

This is the practice of looking at products online before buying them in actual brick-and-mortar stores. It's the opposite of showrooming, where customers look at products in physical stores only to buy them online. Image-based websites and social networks such as Pinterest or Instagram help perpetuate webrooming. Users see items that they like while browsing these sites and then go out in the real world to test or try them on.

Source - https://www.vendhq.com/retail-dictionary

Activity Seven: Annoying expressions.

According to a survey these are the most annoying business jargon expressions.
- Which do you hate the most and why?
- Which do you hear the most?
- Can you think of any other such expressions which you hear often?



1. **Giving 110%**—to give all you have, and then some.
2. **I'll ping you**—to contact someone via computer or phone.
3. **Think outside the box**—to think creatively.
4. **Low-hanging fruit**—something you can obtain with little effort.
5. **Reinvent the wheel**—to duplicate a method that already exists.

Activity Eight: Rôle Plays.

A. You are in a business meeting and you start to realise that you don't actually understand very much of what is being said. You decide to make a stand and ask everyone to talk in plain English!

B. You have to let one of your employees go because of financial difficulties in the company. You try to say it in a confusing way to be less direct.

C. You are presenting some very disappointing financial results to your boss. You try to use a lot of jargon to hide the true picture.

D. You have to tell your employees that they did not earn a bonus this year and so you use some jargon gobbledygook to drown the reality of your message.

E. Now you say the same thing in plain English!



