

## JARGON AT WORK

LEVEL:	B1-B2
TIME:	90 MINS

### Activity 1: Warm-up - Answer the questions

1. What's 'jargon'?
2. What types of jargon have you come across?
3. Do you think you use any type of jargon?
4. Does jargon make communication more or less effective?

### Activity 2A: Introduction - Look at the expressions below. In pairs, write their definitions. Use your creativity but not a dictionary.

low-hanging fruit (the easiest targets)

take the helicopter view (have a general view of a situation)

think outside the box (be creative)

shoot the puppy (do something unthinkable)

### Activity 2B: Are your definitions right?

At the end of the lesson, compare your definitions with the explanations given in the listening and reading activities.

### Activity 3: Listen to the BBC programme about work-related jargon. Write down at least six jargon expressions

Author of the recording: BBC Learning English

Source: [www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/lower-intermediate/unit-27/session-1/activity-3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/lower-intermediate/unit-27/session-1/activity-3)

• take a helicopter view

• to action

• <u>read from the same page</u>	• <u>low-hanging fruit</u>
• <u>blue-sky thinker/thinking</u>	• <u>upscale</u> etc.

**Activity 4: Listen again and match the expressions 1-9 to the definitions A-I**

1E, 2H, 3A, 4B, 5G, 6C, 7I, 8D, 9F

1	blue-sky thinking	A	to be creative and not limit your thinking
2	push the envelope	B	think about or understand a situation in the same way as other people
3	think out of the box	C	deal with
4	read from the same page	D	the easiest targets
5	take the helicopter view	E	having ideas which are very original, even if they are not practical or realistic
6	action (verb)	F	high quality
7	effect (verb)	G	look at the general view of a situation and not the details
8	low-hanging fruit	H	to go even further than others and do things that might be new or even risky
9	upscale	I	bring about a change or influence

**Activity 5: Complete the sentences with the expressions from the exercise above.**

**Examples:** BBC Learning English, 6-minute Vocabulary Series

**Source:** [www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/lower-intermediate/unit-27/tab/vocabulary](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/lower-intermediate/unit-27/tab/vocabulary)

- I had 100 emails in my inbox this morning. I've actioned 80 of them so far.
- Taking the helicopter view, we can see that the company has steadily expanded over the last few years, but this month's sales figures are rather low.
- To cut energy consumption, we need to reduce worldwide air traffic, rather than making petrol and car tax more expensive – these are just the low-hanging fruit.
- We're not just a normal airline. We're going to push the envelope and offer balloon flights
- Our blue-sky thinking gave us some totally new ideas.
- Jayne's so good at thinking of solutions to problems. She manages to think outside the box.

7. Pat wants the Middle East to be our target market, but I think we should aim for the Far East. I don't think we're reading from the same page.
8. The company effected many changes in the pay and conditions of their employees last year.
9. In her presentation the manager concluded that the company needs to reach upscale customers next year.

### Activity 6: Match the titles to the paragraphs

**Author of the article:** Gillian Sharpe, BBC Scotland News

**Source:** [www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-14653080](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-14653080)

A) Linguistic clothes	B) No-brainer	C) Room 121	D) 'Solutionising' business jargon
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1. D) 'Solutionising' business jargon

In a tented theatre at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, an enthusiastic audience shout out their favourite pieces of business jargon. "Could we park that idea," says one. "Direction of travel", suggests another. Then from the back comes "solutionise", prompting a widespread groan from the crowd. How we communicate at work and get the story of a business out to the wider world has never been more important. Yet the language of business - and more particularly when it descends into jargon - is often the stuff of humour. Think "low-hanging fruit" (an easy, achievable goal), "shoot the puppy" (do the unthinkable) or perhaps "think outside the box" (be creative).

Writers Jamie Jauncey and John Simmons have been sharing some of what they believe goes into really effective business communication.

2. C) Room 121

As well as training and writing for business, Mr Jauncey also writes fiction. Mr Simmons **comes from a background** in branding. The two men have been publicising their book Room 121, but that is just part of their wider view that business communication needs to be more human. Mr Jauncey explained: "Business has lost its way with language". "It's lost its personality - that's the big problem - therefore it doesn't make a good connection with its audiences.

"It's **long-winded**, it's alienating, it's impersonal. It uses a lot of abstractions and it's just difficult language to work with and it isn't very effective in terms of good communication." But is a personality-filled piece of writing always appropriate in a business setting? "I think you'd be surprised at how appropriate it is on how many different occasions," argued John Simmons.

### 3. B) No-brainer

"Why would any company want to come across as boring and faceless - it's a **no-brainer** really," he said. "How do you build a bridge between your organisation and the audiences out there that you're trying to reach and trying to influence? You only do it by sharing universal principles of humanity and that's effective communication." Outside the theatre, people chatted about what they had heard. "I think we're all guilty," said one. "When it comes to writing, you take on a different **mindset** at work and think, 'I've got to write in a certain way'."

Mr Simmons and Mr Jauncey believe that being natural and authentic is key to good business communication. Along with fellow business writer Stuart Delves, they also run the Dark Angels programme - creative writing in business courses. They believe that developing a person's personal, creative writing will put personality into what they write at work. "We use a lot of poetry and literature as the basis of our exercises and things like observation," said Mr Delves. "In many ways there are similarities with a creative writing course that you might do with a poet or a playwright, but I think what's unique about what we do is making that bridge between that kind of writing, into the world of business. "That's what I've been doing for 25 years, whenever I possibly can - to **breathe life into** writing."

### 4. A) Linguistic clothes

Kirsty Regan is a businesswoman who has been on the course. Her Edinburgh-based company, News Direct, helps organisations keep track of what politicians and others are - or are not - saying about them. She said some of her previous business writing felt like she was using language she felt obliged to use. But that has changed. "We're comfortable in our own linguistic clothes if you like," she commented. "We know what we have to say, we know where we come from, what our services are based on, what are the principles of what we do". "Certainly I feel that I've got the language to express that more usefully."

For a final word on their view of good communication, John Simmons recalled his grandmother answering the phone - a machine which for her was unfamiliar and slightly strange. He explained: "Sometimes she'd be called to the phone and you'd sit in the other room and think, 'who is that on the phone, I don't recognise that voice' - and it was my poor old nan putting on this posh voice. "And that's what happens in business with business writing - people put on that equivalent of the posh telephone voice. "They think it does them good - actually it makes them just seem rather **ludicrous** and pompous, so laugh at it, cut it out, move on," he added.

**Activity 7: Read the text again and decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F)**

1. Business jargon enables smooth communication. F
2. Mr Simmons opts for a colloquial approach to business writing. F
3. People feel obligated to change their style while writing. T
4. The Dark Angels programme is designed to teach how to add a personal touch to business communication. T
5. According to the article, literary language is useless for work-related pieces of writing. F
6. Kirsty Regan has always been able to write freely. F
7. The 'phone voice' example shows that you may be ridiculed for changing your communication style. T

**Activity 8: Match the expression in bold to the definitions**

**Definitions by:** Cambridge Dictionary

**Source:** dictionary.cambridge.org

<u>a no-brainer</u>	something that is very easy to do or to understand
<u>come from a background in</u>	a person's education, family and experience of life
<u>breathe life into</u>	bring new ideas and energy to something
<u>long-winded</u>	boring because it is too long
<u>mindset</u>	a person's way of thinking and their opinions
<u>ludicrous</u>	stupid

**Activity 9A: Vocabulary revision**

Look at your definitions in 2A and compare your definitions with the meanings you have

learnt.

### **Activity 9B: Vocabulary revision and speaking**

Choose five expressions from the lesson. Make a question with each of them. In pairs, ask and answer your questions.

Example: *think outside the box* - Who is really good at thinking outside the box at your company?

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...
4. ...
5. ...

### **Activity 10: Discussion**

1. What are advantages and disadvantages of using jargon?
2. How does jargon affect communication?
3. Should it be taught to use or to avoid?