

Jargon Busters

Aim To give a business visitor material for students in the classroom

Objectives At the end of the activity, students will be able to:

- use deductive reasoning to match a term to its definition
- be able to define jargon in a business context

Timings This activity is designed to last approximately 45 minutes

Method Introduce yourself by saying your name and briefly what your job is or was. If you have any knowledge of a modern language, tell students what level of understanding you have and how it has been useful to you. (Or tell them this at the end of the session if you prefer)

Then read aloud, slowly:

"Let's have a show of hands. How many of you are studying a modern foreign language?"

What language(s) are you studying? (*probably French, German, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin Chinese ...*)

"Over time, business has grown its own language - a set of meanings and words, called **Jargon**. Jargon is words and phrases that have one meaning to the general population but take on a whole different meaning when used in a business context.

"This is a bit of a fun exercise. I'm going to read out some definitions and you're going to decide which word or phrase they describe - in other words, you're going to guess what the jargon means. You'll probably have heard of some of these.

"You can work in pairs (or more). Put up your hands when you think you know which term I'm describing. A bonus point if you can put it into a sensible sentence.

(If you have access to a data projector and screen, project Table 1 below onto the screen. If not, hand out copies of the table.)

Read out loud the definitions from Table 2, in random order. Don't read down from the top as they're in alphabetical order and students quickly realise!

When you or they have had enough

"What do you reckon - is that a foreign language? *(pause for someone to answer. Wait for them to justify their yes or no. Ask whether anyone else has any thoughts on this. Manage the discussion by indicating who should speak next.*

"Do you use any special jargon in school?"

"Why do you think people use jargon? *(if you get answers, repeat them aloud so that everyone can hear, and to give you time to think. Answers might include to make themselves seem important by mystifying what they're doing, to feel part of the club, to make them seem in the know ...)*

"What would you think if you were new in a workplace and colleagues were using this language?"

Conclusions

- jargon also exists in foreign languages - google them to find out
- what skills were you using? *(language agility, word recognition, deductive reasoning, literacy skills ...)*
- could knowledge of jargon be useful?

"Thank you for listening and good luck in your exams / next year

Table I (to project or hand out)

carrots and sticks	cook the books
above board	on the take
bag of snakes	ballpark
desk jockey	eleventh hour
bankroll	bean counter
outside the box	put to bed
blow by blow	blue sky thinking
rubber stamp	win-win
fire away	fire fighting
give the nod	gofer
fit for purpose	free lunch
game plan	get the axe
grease the wheels	hot-desking
in the black	at this juncture

Table 2 – read out the definition only

Definition	Answer
open and honest	above board
as of now	at this juncture
a business situation with many unexpected problems.	bag of snakes
an estimate	ball-park
to finance	bankroll
an accountant	bean counter
covering all the details	blow by blow
coming up with creative ideas	blue sky thinking
incentives and disincentives	carrots and sticks
falsify company records	cook the books
an office worker	desk-jockey
the last minute	eleventh hour
go ahead	fire away
solving a problem that needs immediate attention	fire fighting
good for what it is	fit for purpose
something for nothing	free lunch
a strategy	game plan
to be sacked	get the axe
to approve	give the nod
a junior worker, often given low-level tasks	gofer
to bribe	grease the wheels
the practice of having several employees share	hot-desking
profitable	in the black
dishonest	on the take
avoiding a traditional or common approach.	outside the box
to conclude something	put to bed
to approve	rubber-stamp
good for people on both sides	win-win

Table 3 – for less able or younger students

<p>bag of snakes Context: Just as I expected, this situation is a bag of snakes</p>	<p>on the take Context: You can't trust Mr Smith – he's on the take</p>
<p>bean counter Context: Our bean counter says we've done ok this year</p>	<p>rubber stamp Context: I don't expect you to do more than rubber stamp this plan</p>
<p>desk jockey Context: I don't want to be a desk jockey all my life</p>	<p>cook the books Context: Please don't cook the books</p>
<p>gofer Context: He's just a gofer.</p>	<p>get the axe Context: He'll get the axe if he carries on like that</p>
<p>ballpark Context: Give me a ballpark figure</p>	<p>free lunch Context: There's no such thing as a free lunch</p>
<p>fire fighting Context: I'm going to be fire fighting rather than planning ahead today</p>	<p>grease the wheels Context: Can you grease the wheels so that this project gets off the ground?</p>
<p>blue sky thinking Context: Let's start with a blank sheet of paper and do some blue sky thinking and see what happens</p>	<p>win-win Context: Try and see if you can come up with a win-win situation</p>