



Common Core Language Standards: “Double Double Speak Speak” Focus: Understanding Jargon

Overview

Students will play with jargon, understanding the definition of jargon and the importance of context to understanding and decoding jargon in different contexts. Featuring both nursery rhymes and Kanye!

Standards

- **9-10.LS. 6.** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level, and demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Objectives

- To acquire new vocabulary
- To understand jargon within specific contexts
- To understand the uses of jargon as ways of excluding and including others within a group
- To decode meanings of words using context clues
- To use various references to decode exact meanings of words
- To understand appropriate use of common domain-specific language

Materials

- Internet access to online dictionary source such as Dictionary.com
 - (Optional) Subscription to the Oxford English Dictionary
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Activity 1: Twittering!

Lecture

Introduce students to the concept of jargon, a fourteenth-century French term for “the twittering or warbling of birds.”



Definition of Jargon: An outlandish, technical language of a particular profession, group, or trade. Jargon can include specialized terms particular to people’s professions (e.g., the military) or particular to specific groups (e.g., slang).

Small Groups

To illustrate the problem that jargon often presents when we encounter it in writing, students should work together in small groups to match the jargon term to its actual, literal meaning. Encourage students to make guesses -- this work is solely for practice. Note: This can be a competitive exercise for fun.

Jargon Terms	Plain Speech
1. Bilateral suborbital hematoma	a. To make a sudden change in a previous plan
2. ROFL	b. I will return soon.
3. Call an audible	c. Black eye
4. Circular file	d. Invasive and destructive computer program
5. Virus	e. To find something funny
6. BRB	f. Trash can
7. AWOL	g. All-points bulletin
8. 404	h. Information not present, answer not there
9. APB	i. Absent without permission
10. Stat	j. Immediately

Whole Class

Discuss why specific groups use jargon or slang -- what advantage does using slang or jargon give to one group over another? (In some ways, jargon can be like a “secret code” to determine who is a member of a particular group...and who is not!)

Activity 2: Coruscate, Coruscate...

Introduce students to the idea that there are different levels of discourse -- we can divide them up as low/medium/high; slang/standard/formal; or other possible divisions. Students should have fun “translating” well-known nursery rhymes into different types of jargon and “decoding” others!



Small Groups

See which small group can “decode” the following nursery rhymes the fastest! Again, this can be done in teams of cooperative groups for fun.

Elevated Jargon or Slang	Nursery Rhyme!
Coruscate, coruscate, minuscule nuclear explosion How I ponder the nature of your existence.	Twinkle, twinkle, little star How I wonder what you are.
The minuscule arachnid ascended the hydration tube. The precipitation descended and swept away the minuscule arachnid. The reappearance of the solar body evaporated the precipitation Therefore, the minuscule arachnid ascended the hydration tube once more.	
Jack and Jill ascended the promontory To fill their cylindrical metallic container full of dihydrogen oxide. Jack abruptly descended the promontory and ruptured his cranium. Jill also abruptly descended the promontory.	
The superannuated matriarch Hubbard Went to her wooden culinary storage receptacle To procure an ossicle for her impoverished canine. When she arrived at the wooden culinary storage receptacle, She found it was barren of nutriment And the impoverished canine had no sustenance.	

Hints: Itsy bitsy spider, Jack and Jill, Old Mother Hubbard



Discussion

Ask students how they were able to decode the nursery rhymes. Odds are, knowing that they ARE nursery rhymes in the first place was a crucial piece of evidence. The students' understanding of context -- that is, their knowledge of common nursery rhymes -- allowed them to decode the entire passage based on one or two clues (e.g., the names Jack and Jill). Stress that **context** is crucial to narrowing down understanding and determining meaning.

Extension

Students who are particularly adept at this exercise may enjoy "translating" the nursery rhymes above (or others) into classroom-appropriate slang. Conversely, they may enjoy "translating" classroom-appropriate song lyrics into standard, mainstream English.

Example -- Kanye West's "Stronger"	
Original Lyric	Standard English
Act like you can't tell who made this new gospel Homey take six and take this, haters.	Pretend as if you cannot determine the author of this statement. Take a rest, my friend, and take this as an act of defiance, my enemies.

Conclusion

Jargon and slang often communicate the same essential meaning but do so in very different ways. Even a simple nursery rhyme can be recast in academic jargon and a popular song can be translated into mainstream speech. Using context to determine meaning and understanding that English (and other languages) exist on many different levels can increase students' appreciation of the language and its possibilities.



Resources

- **Jargon**
<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/1914-/language/jargon.htm>
This is a good starting point on what modern jargon is; good notes.
- **Uses of Jargon**
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/grammar/examples/examples-of-jargon-in-the-workplace.html>
Some good examples and links to various uses of jargon in different professions.
- **Business, Police, and Computer Jargon**
<http://www.businesstune-ups.com/Examples-Of-Jargon.html>
Examples of business, police, and computer jargon.
- **More Examples 1**
<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/jargon-examples.html>
This is a really good list of examples; it would be easy to make a matching game from this site.
- **More Examples 2**
<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/4357204/examples-of-jargon>
Good modern jargon examples; not too hard.