

AS Level English Language



Lady Pipi Gigi (1782-1818)

LaDy PiPi GiGi

This mnemonic helps us to remember the six linguistic methods that we use to analyse the English language at A Level:

Lexis and Semantics: the linguistic method that deals with words and their meanings

Discourse Structure: the linguistic method that deals with how language is organised

Phonology and Phonetics: the linguistic method that deals with how language sounds

Pragmatics: the linguistic method that deals with how language is interpreted in context

Grammar and Syntax: the linguistic method that deals with how words are adapted and ordered to make sense

Graphology: the linguistic method that deals with the visual presentation of language

Questions Focusing On The Linguistic Methods:

1. **Lexis and Semantics:** *why do you think Kellogg's might have changed their coco pops slogan from 'they turn the milk brown' to 'they turn the milk chocolatey'?*
2. **Discourse Structure:** *can you explain how the comments beneath a YouTube video are structured?*
3. **Phonology and Phonetics:** *when the Great War poet Wilfred Owen wrote "Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle/Can patter out their hasty orisons," how was he being clever?*
4. **Pragmatics:** *what would you do in Steve's position and why?*

Steve: Do you want a glass of wine?
Daisy: Oh, I'm driving.
5. **Grammar and Syntax:** *can you explain the differences between these two headlines?*
 - Military Planes Destroy Hospital
 - Hospital Destroyed
6. **Graphology:** *what is wrong with this?*

Robertson & Sons' Funeral Directors

More on Linguistic Methods: Can you explain how the following jokes create humour?

Lexis and Semantics

*Why are rock stars so cool?
They're always surrounded by fans.*

Discourse Structure

*Knock knock!
Who's there?
Interrupting cow.
Interrupting –
- MOOOO!*

Pragmatics

*CUSTOMER: Waiter! What is this fly doing in my soup?
WAITER: Erm... I think it's doing the breast stroke, sir.*

Phonology

What do you call a deer with no eyes?

No idea.

Grammar

Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.

Graphology

PLAN AH_{EAD}

The perils of jargon: a plea to speak in plain English

Celia Walden examines how social workers, hospitals and others eschew straight-talking in favour of language they think makes them sound more intelligent

The road sign blocking my route across west London last week simply read: “Reinstatement.” Of what or whom was anyone’s guess; as with all government notices, customs forms or indeed anything penned by petty bureaucrats, it made about as much sense as a box of hair. Willfully ambiguous, the sign was also pompous enough to be amusing. And if the writing of it made some grey-faced, grey-suited little jobsworth puff out his chest at his grey Formica desk, bully for him.

Our increasing tendency towards linguistic obfuscation becomes distinctly unamusing, however, when critical, life-changing documents like social workers’ reports are so badly and bombastically written as to be incomprehensible to all concerned.

So when family court judge Jeremy Lea expressed fury this week over the lack of plain English in one such social worker’s report – which was key in deciding the fate of two children – he highlighted a very real British problem.

Reading out passages of the document at a family court hearing in Nottingham, he criticised it for being so poorly written it might as well have been “in a foreign language”. That said, it seems unlikely that even Tina Pugh, the social worker who wrote the report, could translate phrases like “imbued with ambivalence”, “having many commonalities emanating from their histories,” and “issues had a significant interplay on (her) ability” into plain English, given the sum total of their significance is, at best, white noise.

Jargon may have its place in pop music and contemporary art, where it can at least pretend to give meaning and gravitas to something fundamentally lightweight. It may also have its place in business and advertising, where phrases like “run up the flagpole” (find out what other people think of a new idea), “opening the kimono” (revealing information) and “blue skying” (brainstorming) will lighten boardroom vocabulary. But it has no place in any arena that directly affects ordinary peoples’ lives – politics being the prime example. And yet just last month, the Prime Minister was forced to issue a letter to every civil servant in Whitehall and around the country calling on officials to simplify the language used in ministerial submissions and urging them not to “hide bad news in complexities”.

Hiding bad news in complexities is irksome enough on British Rail, when a carriage full of commuters are left scratching their heads at the laboriously announced reason for their delay (instead of asking the train driver to bungle his way through “poor railhead adhesion”, why not let him say “there’s snow on the tracks”?)

But it becomes downright irresponsible when used by health professionals or teachers. One friend told in a school report that her son was “struggling to successfully co-exist” with his classmates wrote an angry letter back to the teacher demanding assurance that similar jargon wasn’t being used in the classroom. But of course it will be across Britain. Only

yesterday the headmaster of Bohunt – the Hampshire school where five Chinese teachers applied their country’s famously strict methods for a BBC documentary – hit back at claims that his pupils were disruptive by saying that Chinese schools use “didactic teaching” methods. He might want to look up “didactic” in the Oxford English Dictionary – and check out “tautologies” while he’s there.

It’s no coincidence that the most jargon-filled arenas are also the most insecure. Desperate to belong to a particular clique, teenagers will pepper their conversations with argot and revel in the sense of superiority not being widely understood gives them. Which is all very sweet until they turn into adults so fraught with intellectual insecurity (thanks to our failing education system) that, like Russell Brand, they resort to cloaking their shortcomings in long words plucked at random from the online thesaurus. Again, this wouldn’t matter if the bilge-speakers were figures of fun and not somehow elevated to positions of authority.

The situation becomes very grave indeed when social workers like Tina Pugh get so high on their own circumlocutions that they forget their real purpose: to give a clear picture of often murky domestic scenarios. When any social worker recommends that a child “be extracted from their familial context”, for example (and these are my words, not Pugh’s), they shouldn’t be allowed to forget for a second that they are recommending a child be taken away from his or her parents - in marginally less bleak language.

Reading out the final paragraph of Pugh’s report – “Due to SH’s apparent difficulties identifying the concerns, I asked her to convey a narrative about her observations” – Judge Lea asked what would be so wrong in saying, “I asked her to tell me?” and inquired whether Pugh had even attempted to discuss issues with the mother in question “in a language she would understand? SH is, and I am sure she will forgive me for saying so, a simple soul.” He stopped short of pointing out that Pugh herself was also probably a simple soul, which might explain her need to buoy herself up with jargonese.

No one was suggesting that she should have talked down to her charge, but by talking herself up, she will only have made a desperate situation still more painful.

Taken from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/11782337/The-perils-of-jargon.html>

Prep Work For The AS English Language Course

1. Learn the six linguistic methods, using LaDy PiPi GiGi to help you.
2. Celia Walden takes the topic of jargon and explores it in her article. Pick an aspect of the English Language that interests (or annoys) you and do what Walden did: write an article of between 500-1,000 words.

Make sure the work is ready to hand in at the start of your AS level course.