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MOOCs! What? – A debate about the impact of professional educational jargon: Is it good for inclusion? Do we need to promote staff awareness?

## Student Dissertation

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## MON: MOOCs! What? – A debate about the impact of professional educational jargon Is it good for inclusion? Do we need to promote staff awareness? (Sheila Greenwood)

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Cloud created by:



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

8 December 2014

Can anyone relate any stories to being put off by educational jargon?

OR

Conversley does anyone like the idea of professional jargon and love to use it

### Extra content



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

19:28 on 16 January 2015

### Abstract

**TITLE - Moocs! What? - A debate about the impact of educational jargon. Is it good for inclusion? Do we need to promote staff awareness?**

The definition of educational jargon here being defined as the use of specific acronyms, words or phrases used by educators in their daily routines within their specific profession. These jargonised words whilst being well known and used as a form of inclusion within specific

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[OU H818 'The Networked](#)

communities can in some cases exclude outsiders.

In this multimedia presentation I explore the topic of professional jargon, particularly educational jargon and why it thrives *Martin, B. (1992)* in peer to peer usage but can also be disruptive to the point of exclusion when used in the wrong context as in teacher to parent or teacher to lay person.

As a student new to education as a profession I found myself being very quickly 'closed out', rather than 'opened up' from tutor group forum conversations due to the fact that I just did not understand some jargon banter such as *MOOC,s\**, *CPD,s\** or *MOODLE,s \**. Asking the question "Who will admit to being befuddled by academic jargon?" in the student cafe gave some candid positive responses suggesting that this may be a larger problem.

The presentation

The aim of my presentation is to highlight the need for my artifact which is an answer to the "so what" can we do about it question in conference. By creating awareness (where it is needed) amongst some educators regarding the barriers that can be caused by excessive educational jargon, the project, an awareness journey video aims to alert educators to know their audience and use language appropriately.

The artefact

The intended artefact video explores the fact that jargon has its place among peer groups and like minded professionals, allowing for identities that promote a sense of inclusion and belonging. Contrasted with the attraction argument are suggestions that educational jargon is having a detrimental effect on some children and excluding parents from seeing progress in their own children by not understanding. *Secret Teacher, . (2014)* The journey then transports the viewer into a short County Council quiz that illustrates awareness to the futility in some jargon, especially when you don't understand the context. A YouTube clip "*Jargon*" *Plattner, A. (2012)* also shares that some educators do understand that speaking correctly to your audience is necessary if you need to include them and convey the right messages. The video presentation ends with a student colleague (*Kidger, L (2014)*) explaining how she trains her students to speak professionally when talking among professional peers but then stresses the need to adopt a plain English speaking policy when talking to customers, echoing *Dilloff ,NJ. (2013)*.

The "Open Education in an Open Landscape" criteria is fulfilled by this artefacts' construction from content refined by multimedia networking and peer feedback for conference and afterwards once edited the finished projects aim is to be a (free) use tool if chosen, for use in any staff jargon awareness projects.



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

19:37 on 16 January 2015 (Edited 16:47 on 26 January 2015)

Link to accessible transcript of presentation Moocs What?

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/gjwvbkkr0yitlcb/Moocs What Accessible transcript - Full Notes for Presentation.docx?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/gjwvbkkr0yitlcb/Moocs%20What%20Accessible%20transcript%20-%20Full%20Notes%20for%20Presentation.docx?dl=0)



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

13:37 on 9 February 2015 (Edited 15:31 on 9 February 2015)

Practitioner' Online Conference  
2015

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Link to Presentation Moocs What?

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/mbzkd9mg1osuopr/Conference Presentation 2015 Sheila Greenwood For Dropbox.ppt?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/mbzkd9mg1osuopr/Conference%20Presentation%202015%20Sheila%20Greenwood%20For%20Dropbox.ppt?dl=0)



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

17:54 on 13 February 2015 (Edited 18:08 on 13 February 2015)

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Link to project - still in development mode with step through functionality only. Voice over still to be added.

[http://prezi.com/67h6twxcc2la/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/67h6twxcc2la/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

15:27 on 28 February 2015

[+ Add extra content](#)

## Embedded Content

added by [Sheila Greenwood](#)

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## Contribute

**Discussion (16)**

[Links \(1\)](#)

[Academic References \(1\)](#)



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

9:47am 26 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

I am looking forward to your presentation Sheila as we are covering a similar area. It will be interesting to see the similarities and differences between what we have found out. I will be really interested to see the artefact as it is something that I think is badly needed in my organisation where acronyms abound!



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

10:12am 26 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you Rachel

At the moment I am struggling with just exactly what to include and what to leave out of the presentation. I think now in the presentation I will mainly concentrate on how by using

peer/data feedback and some theories about the awareness to jargon in education it has reshaped what I intend for an artefact. This has now changed from a digital type jargon buster which would only perhaps solve half a problem to an educationla jargon use awareness video that could be used in staff training/ personal development modules.



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

7:05pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Its really interesting to see how your project has evolved. I have found something similar in that I don't think I have really had the results I was expecting. I think for me, my paper will present itself more as a starting point to raise the issue that this area is under-researched. I know we have both found it hard to find other writers who have discussed the issues we have both been trying to look at.

I actually like the idea of an awareness video a bit more than a jargon buster if I am honest as I think the important this is ensuring people see when there is jargon. In some institutions it is so ingrained in the culture that unless new people come in, many don't realise how excluding it can be.

I am working on Monday 9th but have blocked out time just to see your presentation. looking forward to it



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

3:32pm 2 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Rachel

The ideas for my project are evolving constantly - when I see glimpses of other peroples projects e.g. Samatha Marks and Oliver Stretland and their website ideas then I see new possibilities. Although I am anxious and a little nervous I will be looking forward to presenting as to what I have so far. In terms of stepping outside of a comfort zone H818 has been massive for me.

Thanks for taking time out to view my presentation I appreciate it. Hope it doesn't dissappoint.



[Stefanie Anyadi](#)

4:54pm 2 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Sheila, I won't be able to "attend" your session, unfortunately, but wish I could - your topic has generated so much discussion and interest, and you've put so much thought into it. As Catherine says, being nervous shows that you care!



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

4:45pm 6 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

In preparation for the presentations I have been having a look back over OpenStudio today and it has proved really interesting. Your postings in particular have made some really good points I intend to take back and probably pick up on in my EMA and some that made

me realise there were things I could have done better/differently. I think it has taken time to really get used to working in an open way and engage with and take on the work shared by others. In particular I had a look at your pest diagram in regards to jargon busting and it made me think of things I had not considered. I think these will help in me finalising my draft artefact paper and helping to put a wider perspective on the topic I am covering. You say this is out of your comfort zone but you have really embraced open working - it is clear from OS and the forums how your thinking has evolved and how you have engaged many of us in thinking and talking about the topic of jargon. It is a skill to have encouraged others to share - many seem to be passionate about the topic. It will be interesting to see (if you cover this) whether you have some across some of the same sorts of limitations as me with regards to doing a survey. One thing I think would have affected both of us (but something that has maybe only become clearer as I am nearing the end of H818) is the fact that our open sharing of work has needed to be limited to H818 student group. This is for obvious reasons of confidentiality but I wonder what more we would have discovered if we could have cast our nets even wider as our 'pool' of people to share with was limited to those already interested and engaged in HE and networking (as they have taken this module). Best of luck for Monday



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

5:54pm 6 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Rachel

Firstly I must say thank you for this feedback- I am really flattered that you have embraced some of my thinking here. As regards to opening up to the challenge I have indeed found it difficult at times with some frustrations and quite a lot of tears along the way. Possibly H818 is my most challenging of the 8 courses I have studied with the OU to date. Like you I have come to realise the value of being open and the candid responses to my questions and feedback have not only helped me develop the project but also broadened my own thinking as to the value of working in a collaborative way. I have unashamedly used some peer input (with permissions of course) into my own presentation which has arguably enhanced the message I want to make. Ten minutes is definitely not enough time to present the project and my head is spinning with ideas. Scanning Cloudworks I can already see the value in developing the idea further from the artefacts of others, into say a website project perhaps. Good luck with your presentation, I intend to be watching. Onwards and upwards.

Regards

Sheila



[M.M](#)

7:34pm 9 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Sheila

I wasn't available today as I was at work but am just watching back the recording. Absolutely loved your approach and presentation. You looked at two sides; using Lisa and yourself, you didn't take yourself too seriously and I loved the interaction.

Just super-well done! :)



[oliver sterland](#)

10:12am 10 February 2015 (Edited 10:13am 10 February 2015) [Permalink](#)

Hi Sheila,

Same as Marese, just watched your presentation and picked up a few good tips which I'll try to incorporate into my talk (but can't promise), namely great consideration of accessibility with descriptions of pictures, measured pace of delivery, and seamless voiceover while going to your web tour - very slick.

I like the image of having to be a Chameleon; the difficulty comes when there are six green predators and one orange fluffy thing all in the same room, what colour do I turn then? :) Actually, I'm being silly, that's what politicians (the good ones) are so adept at.

Well done again, very slick.



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

2:20pm 10 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Your comments and questions from your live presentation:

- ▶ i hear your frustration. good that you asked those questions
- ▶ As well as jargon, political correctness is somewhat intimidating in education
- ▶ I fully understand the buddlement, why do we accept jargon when we don't understand it!
- ▶ Good writing makes people feel like geniuses, bad writing makes them feel like dunces, Pinker
- ▶ Jargon can be a useful guide to the issues which dominate discussion/thinking
- ▶ But jargon is used by people to assimilate to groups.
- ▶ Do we assume too much knowledge in our audience maybe?
- ▶ This seems fair. Some situations require specialist language but the importance is knowing your audience
- ▶ Jargon = common language which can be unifying
- ▶ listening comprehension is affected by the use of too much jargon!
- ▶ Wenger would say it defines a community of practice
- ▶ Jargon buster for teachers could be a good idea - on a similar note, when I worked in FE I used to have to use [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) to work out what students were actually saying in my sessions to know whether I needed to call it out or not!
- ▶ But we assume too much knowledge in our audience too often
- ▶ Management speak is a form of jargon which is certainly not communication!



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

11:24am 13 February 2015 (Edited 2:23pm 15 February 2015) [Permalink](#)

**I hear your frustration, good that you asked those questions**

Yes thank you for this, I was genuinely surprised at the amount of candid feedback that my open question ("*Can anyone else relate to being befuddled by educational jargon?*") in the student cafe produced. These responses were overwhelming, suggesting that jargon in education could create a problem.

This input was the catalyst I needed to pursue the topic of jargon and subsequently the end artefact which has again evolved with peer/tutor input from a digital jargon buster for the end user into a multimedia video intended to create awareness about when and where to use jargon successfully.

Since viewing all the presentations (and I did see every one), my head is spinning with ideas and I am now evolving it further as I can see the potential of a website that could possibly incorporate video, digital jargon busters, blog type Q&As and general opinions about best practice. So many other possibilities I feel.

**As well as jargon, political correctness is somewhat intimidating in education.**

As a student on this course and new to the world of education I have sensed (through peer feedback) that perhaps change happens at a slower pace in education than it would in a multinational company. The company perhaps always working on the edge of chaos and ready to accept the necessary implementation of any new idea that would give it a possible competitive edge.

Educators, however, steeped in tradition and hierarchy arguably perhaps lose some of this competitiveness preferring instead to foster the sense of privilege that time served academics expect, thus creating a sense of intimidation in lower down ranks perhaps.

**I fully understand the befuddlement, why do we accept jargon when we don't understand it?**

I didn't understand the jargon when I started this course and after just one week I believed that H818 was not for me. I could not break in to what I thought seemed to be an exclusive club.

By having the confidence (and this was not easy) to ask the questions I was enlightened to the fact that others also found excessive jargon to be a problem in education. So.. be brave and ask the questions.. what does this mean? can you define the acronym?.....etc etc.. You do not need to accept what you do not understand.

**Good writing makes people feel like geniuses, bad writing makes them feel like dunces, (Pinker)**

Yes, I have just looked up (Pinker 2014) as he is new to me and read his 6 tips to good writing.

I think the trick here is to know your stuff - don't be caught out pretending to know something you don't as happened with David Cameron recently. He thought LOL meant "Lots of love"- Ha ha, LOL (laugh out loud).



### **Jargon can be a useful guide to the issues which dominate discussion/thinking**

I'm not quite sure what this statement is saying but Jargon can be useful especially as a shorthand in discussion where people are like minded and know the terminologies. Jargon in these instances reduce the need for lengthy wordings.

### **But jargon is used by people to assimilate to groups.**

Yes, jargon has its place within the right community. I made the point in my presentation regarding "Teen Speak" -alien to the rest of us but language that reinforces members as part of a group.

### **Do we assume too much knowledge in our audience maybe?**

Possibly, it is not always good to assume that even amongst educators that everyone will necessarily know what is being conversed. Know your audience is a good tip here.

### **This seems fair. Some situations require specialist language but the importance is knowing your audience.**

This statement follows on from the one above in that it is important to assess who you are speaking with and moderate language accordingly (*Dilloff 2013*). *Lisa Kidger's* clip in my presentation explains this well I think.

### **Jargon = common language which can be unifying.**

This point is similar to one above - in that Jargon can be a reinforcement element that helps cement relationships within a group of people. The jargon being a common knowledge/language known only within that particular group or set which can positively differentiate it from other groups.

### **Listening comprehension is affected by too much jargon.**

Absolutely! The somewhat (excessive by my standards) jargon used among students in H818, at the beginning of this course was a total switch off. Almost caused me to quit!

### **Wenger would say it defines a community of practice.**

"Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." (Wenger circa 2007).

I can see that jargon might form a pivotal role in cementing a community of practice.

### **Jargon buster for teachers could be a good idea- on a similar note, when I worked in FE I used to use a digital dictionary to work out what students were actually saying in my sessions to know whether I needed to call it out or not!**

Yes I can understand the needless frustration attributed to the excessive use of jargon

from whatever side of the fence you are sitting on. Perhaps the answer here is to create awareness within the group to the futility of some jargon rather than invest in costly jargon busters.

Incidentally every academic institution I looked at online from Kings College Cambridge to the little primary school at the end of our street produces some form of jargon buster, aimed at students or parents. This fact alone sounded alarm bells as to the increasing scale of the problem.

**But we assume too much knowledge in our audience too often.**

Yes, perhaps this is the case but maybe it's not always the fault of either the speaker/instigator or listener.

Take my case as an example. As a student new to education from a lecturing point of view, I choose the first level certificate in online distance learning. My expectations here were that from the beginning educational terms might be explained. However, course H818 which is an optional course also on MAODE perhaps assumes that all terminologies used are widely understood within its community.

The point of my end artefact is to create awareness to the fact that you need to know the audience in which you are trying to communicate and then moderate language accordingly.

**Management speak is a form of jargon which is certainly not communication!**

I agree in that any form of professional jargon will have barriers to inclusion, whether they are intentional to keep the integrity of the profession or an unintentional oversight due to a misunderstanding of audience.

My presentation has only highlighted jargon in education because the topic not only fits the bill but has affected me personally. The point about jargon is that it is everywhere and with each new passing technology it gets compounded text speak etc.....

To try and alleviate the problem campaigners such as The Dyslexia Society and Campaign for Plain English have issued guide lines as to what is best practice.

The intention of my artefact is to create awareness to the problems of jargon and then foster moderation or explanation to language where required.



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

11:32am 13 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you Marese and Oliver for your kind feedback. I really enjoyed the experience, my first time at presenting.

I watched all the presentations and thought all had merit.

Not had a chance to rewind and listen to mine yet. Too busy catching up with work etc. Hope to do this at the weekend and then work out how I might have done this better.

Thanks again

Sheila



[Samantha Marks](#)

10:38am 15 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Sheila, if that was your first time presenting then you should do it more often! I really loved your project and how it has evolved, and how you have been 'brave' in your approach. I was reflecting back on my first experience at MAODE and I felt exactly the same....so much educational talk that I didn't really understand. It's important that we remember this as we continue our journeys, as my experience is that if on eof us feels like this there are bound to be others. What was really impressive was the way you embraced openness within the group, asking questions, getting people involved, trying out new things. but also helping others to develop their projects And the icing on the cake for me was the video you showed of LIsa during the presentation. Just a simply stunning bit of networked practice. There is so much to take away from your approach, project and journey for me, I hope it's been as good for you!



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

3:39pm 15 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you for the feedback Sam - greatly appreciated. I took the approach to create awareness to a peer led identified problem of educational jargon whilst at the same time maximising the theme of open education in an open landscape. Involving peer materials i.e. Lisa and Oliver within my own presentation as part of an open educational resource.

I am pleased with its overall effect as feedback seems to suggest that people have got the intended presentation message.

As far as my artefact is concerned I can see scope for massive improvement from a simple jargon busting tool, through to an educational awareness video to perhaps a website - such as yours. This could incorporate many aspects from educational material to personal views and statistics collections - the end project now has a vast scope I think.

Thanks for your anecdote regarding your partners idea of a Mooc- hilarious!



[P Seaward](#)

5:31pm 17 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Sheila, I loved your conference presentation and your fresh approach to a communication problem we take for granted. You have readily embraced the educational environment and maintained a high level of enthusiasm throughout. Great!



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

6:24pm 17 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you for this feedback Phillipa - I can hardly believe this distance I have travelled in five short months. All credit due to my H818 peers.

Thanks

Sheila

## Contribute to the discussion

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