

## FAHEY- JARGON

At the height of the Enlightenment, philosopher **Étienne Bonnot de Condillac** observed how “every science requires a special language because every science has its own ideas.” Although de Condillac’s main research wasn’t on language, it was mainly focused on the senses, he considered language to be a vehicle to convey feelings and emotions. Let’s just say that his ideas didn’t have a major effect on linguistics. However, he did bring up a good idea about jargon or “the special language” [PAUSE] which is the topic of this episode of *Parlerai or Will Speak in French*.

[START INTRO]

I’m Kendall Fahey and today, we are diving into the part of language that you seem to need to know the right words just to get in the front door.

[ DOOR OPENING SFX]

Jargon, throughout history, can be pretty hard to follow although it does exist. English Language and Literature professor at Indiana University Bloomington, Michael Adams says that jargon and slang for that matter are hard to follow throughout history because it wasn’t written down until printing became popular.

Well its because English was a lot less written than it was spoken then. I mean since mass education and printing and of that and mass communication now we have got written words all around us all of the time but most people in England in the Middle Ages were illiterate and so what they were saying never found its way into manuscripts and the people who were writing the manuscript often weren't interested in what everyday people were saying so there is a real disconnect between the spoken language of the time and the literature language of the time.

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But what is the difference between jargon and slang?

Well, Slang is just the non standard language we use to be, you know, just to be who we are and its not connected to a specific activities or a job or a profession or something like that. CUT But jargon could be very creative too so it's got a slangyness to it in some instances and in other instances its very programmic or formalatic. For instance, UPS people have a huge jargon of alphabet-isms and acronyms

And they all have to know what that means and when they come to your door with that handheld device and they are punching buttons and you don't know what they are saying to the computer through that machine about how they are delivering the package or what actions they have taken but they have a jargon that they use to record all of those official actions. And slang is different from that because slang is just friendly, companionable language we use in everyday life but not necessary in work.

The best thing about jargon, in my opinion, is that it is everywhere. Everyone experiences it through their work or professions or hobbies. It impacts our daily lives in a unique and personal sort of way because no experience with jargon in the same for each person.

Well, most of us are involved in something that has got a jargon. If you are a skateboarder, if that is your avocation, you don't get paid for doing it but you do it because it's a lot of fun and you are in an group of skateboarders. You talk about skateboarding with terms that skateboarders know

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and people who are outside of skateboarding don't know those terms and probably, frankly don't care about it either because it's not the thing they do.

That being said [PAUSE] it can connect and disconnect people at the same time. Jargon can connect groups of people through a common language. It can help communicate complex ideas in a few simple words. But it can also leave people out. If someone doesn't know what a group is saying, it can be a factor of isolation and distancing.

Every line you draw to characterize a group is going to have people who are outsiders as well as people who are insiders to the language.

I'm Kendall Fahey with Parlerai or Will Speak in French. For more stories like this, visit

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