

Lesson Plan: Spotting and Fixing Corporate Jargon

Plain English vs. padded English, for C1+ Business English students

Level: C1-C2

Time: 50-60 minutes

Focus: Register, editing, clarity

Best for: Business English, report writing

Learning objective

By the end of the lesson, students can identify nominalisation and padded jargon in their own and others' writing, and confidently rewrite it in plain, direct English without losing professionalism.

1. Warmer (5 minutes)

Read aloud: *"Moving forward, it is anticipated that stakeholder alignment on core deliverables will be prioritised in the context of evolving strategic imperatives."* Ask: what has this sentence actually said? Who is doing what, by when? Students will find they can't answer, that's the point.

2. Presentation: the jargon toolkit, in reverse (10 minutes)

Present three patterns, deliberately taught backwards (how jargon is built), so students learn to recognise the construction:

Nominalisation. Turning a verb into an abstract noun phrase. "We decided" becomes "a decision-making process was undertaken." The verb carried the meaning; removing it removes clarity, not content.

Needless synonyms. "Use" becomes "utilise." "Now" becomes "at this moment in time." "Help" becomes "facilitate the process of supporting." Longer, not clearer.

Saying nothing at length. A sentence built to survive a skim without committing to anything anyone could act on, agree with, or hold accountable.

3. Controlled practice: translate the jargon (10 minutes)

Students rewrite each sentence in plain English, in ten words or fewer. Answer key on the last page.

1. "An optimisation initiative is being actioned with respect to current workflow inefficiencies."
2. "Utilisation of synergistic paradigm alignments is recommended moving forward."
3. "A determination has been reached regarding the postponement of the launch date."

4. Freer practice: jargon-bingo hunt (15 minutes)

In pairs or small groups, students search a real business document (their own past writing, a sample report, or a genuine press release brought by the teacher) for three examples of nominalisation or needless padding, then rewrite each in plain English. Share the best (worst) example found with the class.

5. Application: the ten-word rewrite challenge (10 minutes)

Give each student a genuinely padded sentence (student-written or teacher-supplied). Challenge: rewrite it in ten words or fewer without losing the actual information. Compare rewrites as a class, discuss which version a busy reader would actually prefer.

6. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Discuss: padded language often feels safer than a direct sentence that might be wrong, but it rarely is wrong, it's just harder to hide behind. "We decided to delay the launch" is a complete, professional sentence. Clarity isn't a

lesser register than complexity, it's simply less forgiving of vagueness.

Answer key (controlled practice, sample plain-English rewrites)

1. *"We're fixing the slow workflow."*
 2. *"We recommend working together more closely."*
 3. *"We've decided to delay the launch."*
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