Jargon

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Introduction of Jargon

Generally speaking, jargon, in its most positive light, can be seen as professional, efficient shorthand. The word "jargon" can be traced to 14th century Old French, but the actual origin is unknown. "Jargon" is derived from the fourteenth century term for "twittering or warbling of birds," which in turn has the root 'garg' from which also stem such words as "gargle," and "gurgle." The original meaning was "to make a twittering noise or sound,"but by modern standards, it has three derivations. One current or modern definition of jargon is "an outlandish, technical language of a particular profession, group, or trade." Another meaning is "unintelligible writing or talk." Yet another definition is "specific dialects resulting from a mixture of several languages." Since the reoccurring problem with jargon is that only a few people may understand the actual terminology used by different groups, this may explain its origin from "twittering" which, of course, would be misunderstood by most people. However, a jargonaut, one who studies jargon, may claim that jargon was invented simply as a professional shorthand, developed out of convenience rather than intentional trickiness.

Jargon vs. Slang

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, slang is defined as "An informal vocabulary composed of invented words, arbitrarily changed words, or extravagant figures of speech." Slang is a compilation of words that have been labeled as "unruly, unrefined, and illogical." The word "Slang" derived, according to etymologists, obscurely. The general consensus it that it is related to the standard word "sling" as used in archaic expressions such as "to sling one's jaw," meaning to "speak rowdily or insultingly." Others believe it to be a derivation from the French word for language, "langue."

Jargon, on the other hand, is "technical talk." As stated earlier, it may be used as a barrier to keep outsiders from understanding something, but not always. An example of how close slang and jargon are may be seen in the use of the following medical terms:

Bilateral probital hematoma (JARGON)
A "black eye", or "shiner" (SLANG)

Who Uses Jargon?

Jargon is commonly used by groups that have a similar interest, like trades and/or professions. However, it can be used by people involved in sports or other casual groups. Most people

associate jargon with the medical or law professions rather than everyday conversations. People may use jargon to leave an impression of intelligence or to confuse a person.

An example of jargon in the medical profession:
agonal- used to describe a major negative change in a person's condition, usually preceding immediate death.

Some medical slang can be misinterpreted as jargon:
scoop and run - used by EMTs and ER personnel for a situation where no treatment is possible. All they can do is 'scoop' the victim up and 'run' with them to the ER.
(This is an example of slang because the terminology is less formal than jargon. For example, "scoop" is another way of saying "pick up" and this terminology is not specific to the medical field.)

Examples of computer/Internet jargon:
~BTW -By The Way
~CYA - See You Around
~FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions
~HTH - Hope This Helps
~IMHO - In My Humble Opinion
~MOTD - Message Of The Day

Commonly we may use jargon terms from NASA such as: "countdown," "all systems go" and "lift off." Jargon can be used by anyone, but for someone to understand what you talking about, they must also know the jargon terms.

Plain English
While jargon is understood by those who know the terminology; plain English is common words everyone can understand. People who use plain English can easily converse with other people because they do not use exaggerated words which may confuse the listener. The plain English movement is growing daily because people want jargon, doublespeak, and other professional terminology taken out of government, law and the medical field. People want to understand what they are reading and hearing without being undermined by 'fancy' terminology. There is such a desire to limit "gobbledegook" language, that a Plain English Campaign has been established for this purpose.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Jargon

Jargon is here, and it is not going anywhere. According to Peter Ives, "For those who use it, it is a language which describes the world in which we live." The occupations of today almost demand their own jargon. Jargon is an aspect of everyone's life in some way be it a job, a hobby, or a sport. Jargon is a way for groups in society to have their own specific language. There are advantages and disadvantages for using jargon. People usually tend to focus on the disadvantages. Using jargon can be fun, and it can be an advantageous. For instance, Jargon can give a person a sense of belonging to a specific group. Today's society loves to show off and using jargon is a

way for people to do this. Jargon can also make it easier for a person to communicate with their fellow employees and/or their friends. For example, someone going for a job interview at a bank or financial institution, would use banking terminology, thus banking jargon to show their expertise in the field.

Using jargon can also be a disadvantage. Jargon can leave someone feeling excluded from a conversation. The military, advertising, teachers, and politicians have all been criticized for using jargon. Using jargon in these four areas leaves people wondering if they have a hidden agenda. Jargon can be a good thing as long as it is not abused. It is easy to just slip into a jargon of your own making it difficult for other people to understand what is being said. According to Peter Ives, "After all, jargon is only jargon for those who don't use it."

Doublespeak:Type of Jargon

According to Alfred Fleishman, doublespeak is a form of jargon often used to mislead or confuse listeners. There are two main variations in doublespeak that relate to jargon: persuasive and inflated doublespeak. Both of these types of doublespeak misdirect intentionally, therefore leading to misconception.

Some examples of persuasive and inflated doublespeak are seen often in many workfields. For example, a politician speaking to the voting public may use persuasive doublespeak in his campaign in an attempt to mislead the elderly about Social Security issues. Inflated doublespeak on the other hand, is quite different and the most widely used form of doublespeak. An example of inflated doublespeak would be calling a garbage collector a sanitation engineer. The changed name created an entirely different image of the garbage collector by using inflated doublespeak. When comparing persuasive doublespeak to inflated doublespeak, one can clearly see that both types are altogether a big misconception of jargon usage. Doublespeak is used daily in various professions and often destroys the real intent of jargon usage. Doublespeak may lead to utter confusion, which is the opposite intent of effective jargon usage.

Here are some additional examples of jargon:

Banking	Military	Teaching	Journalism
CD	Leg	Mainstreaming	Blotter
CSR	PCSing	AP students	Loser space
BOM	Rigger	IAP kids	PIP

*Activity: can you come up with examples of jargon that apply to a group you belong to?

A church group? School? Teenagers/Youth cultures? Boys? Girls? A Sports club?

Medical Jargon Examples:

- STAT: Immediately
- ABG: Arterial Blood Gas
- Vitals: Vital signs
- C-Section: Cesarean Section
- Claudication -limping caused by a reduction in blood supply to the legs
- CAT Scan/CT Scan: Computerized Axial Tomography
- MRI: Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Computer Jargon Examples: Most of these examples are abbreviations, which can be likened to a shorthand code for the computer literate and the Internet savvy. Take a look at some common instances.

- BRB: _Be right back_
- Gr8: _Great_
- FAQs: _Frequently Asked Questions_
- Lol: _Laugh out Loud_
- CYA: _See you around_
- RAM: _Random Access Memory_
- GB: _Gigabyte_
- ROM: _Read-only Memory_
- Backup: _Duplicate a file_

Military Jargon Examples: The following are some military jargon examples, that you may have heard.

- AWOL: _Away without official leave_
- BOHICA: _Bend over, here it comes again_
- SOP: _Standard Operating Procedure_
- AAA: _Anti Aircraft_
- UAV: _Unmanned Aerial Vehicle_
- 11 Bravo: _Infantry_
- WHOA: _War Heroes of America_
- Fatigues: _Camouflage uniforms_

Law Enforcement Jargon Examples: Most of us are aware of police jargon examples, because of their widespread use in TV shows and movies. The following are some examples.

- APB: _All Points Bulletin_
- B&E: _Breaking and Entering_
- DUI: _Driving Under the Influence_
- CSI: _Crime Scene Investigation_
- Clean Skin: _A person without a police record_
- Miranda: _Warning given during an arrest, advising about constitutional rights to remain silent and the right to legal aid._
- Perp: _Perpetrator_
- Slammer: _Jail_
- Social: _Social Security Number_

Common Jargon Examples: These are some jargon words examples which have been around for long enough to be widely recognized and uniformly understood.

- UFO: _Unidentified Flying Object_
- Poker face: _A blank expression_
- Back burner: _Something low in priority, putting something off till a later date_
- On Cloud nine: _Very happy_
- Sweet tooth: _A great love of all things sweet_
- Ballpark figure: _A numerical estimated value_
- Gumshoe/Private Eye: _Detective_
- Shrink: _Psychiatrist_

Jargon

Jargon is itself a loaded word (p. 170). One dictionary defines it, neatly and neutrally, as 'the technical vocabulary or idiom of a special activity or group', but this sense is almost completely overshadowed by another: 'obscure and often pretentious language marked by a roundabout way of expression and use of long words'. For most people, it is this second sense which is at the front of their minds when they think about jargon. Jargon is said to be a *bad* use of language, something to be avoided at all costs. No one ever describes it in positive terms ('that was a delightful piece of rousing jargon'). Nor does one usually admit to using it oneself: the myth is that jargon is something only *other* people employ.

The up side

The reality is that everyone uses jargon. It is an essential part of the network of occupations and pursuits which make up society. All jobs present an element of jargon, which workers learn as they develop their expertise. All hobbies require mastery of a jargon. All sports and games have their jargon. Each society grouping has its jargon. The phenomenon turns out to be universal – and valuable. It is the jargon element which, in a job, can promote economy and precision of expression, and thus help make life easier for the workers. It is also the chief linguistic element which shows professional awareness ('know-how') and social togetherness ('shop-talk').

When we have learned to command it, jargon is something we readily take pleasure in, whether the subject area is motorcycles, knitting, cricket, baseball, computers, or wine. It can add pace, variety, and humour to speech – as when, with an important event approaching, we might slip into NASA-speak, and talk about *countdown, all systems go,* and *lift-off.* We enjoy the mutual showing-off which stems from a fluent use of terminology, and we enjoy the in-jokes which shared linguistic experience permits. Moreover, we are jealous of this knowledge. We are quick to demean anyone who tries to be part of our group without being prepared to take on its jargon. And we resent it when some other group, sensing our lack of linguistic awareness, refuses to let us in.

The down side

If jargon is so essential a part of our lives, why then has it had such a bad press? The most important reason stems from the way jargon can exclude as well as include. We may not be too concerned if we find ourselves faced with an impenetrable wall of jargon when the subject matter has little perceived relevance to our everyday lives, as in the case of hydrology or linguistics. But when the subject matter is one where we feel implicated, and think we have a right to know, and the speaker uses words which act as a barrier to our under-

standing, then we start to complain; and if we suspect that the obfuscation is deliberate policy, we unreservedly condemn, labelling it *gobbledegook* and calling down public derision upon it.
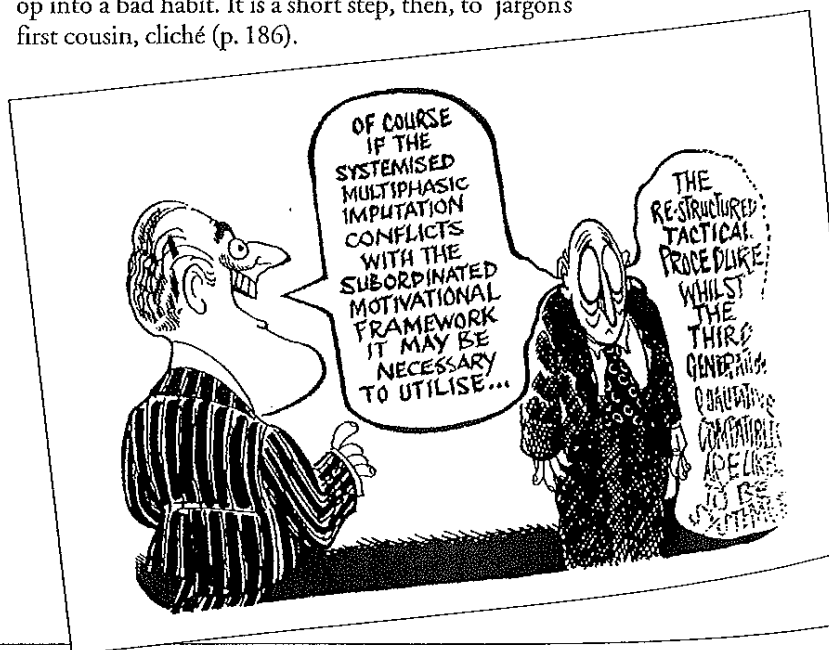
No area is sacrosanct, but advertising, political, and military statements have been especially criticised in recent years by the various campaigns for Plain English (p. 376). In these domains, the extent to which people are prepared to use jargon to hide realities is a ready source of amusement, disbelief, and horror. A lie is a lie, which can be only temporarily hidden by calling it an 'inoperative statement' or 'an instance of plausible deniability'. Nor can a nuclear plant explosion be suppressed for long behind such phrases as 'energetic dissassembly', 'abnormal evolution', or 'plant transient'.

While condemning unnecessary or obscuring jargon in others, we should not forget to look out for it in ourselves. It is so easy to 'slip into' jargon, without realizing that our own listeners/readers do not understand. It is also temptingly easy to slip some jargon into our expression, to *ensure* that others do not understand. And it is just as easy to begin using jargon which we ourselves do not understand. The motivation to do such apparently perverse things is not difficult to grasp. People like to be 'in', to be part of an intellectual or technical elite; and the use of jargon, whether understood or not, is a badge of membership. Jargon, also, can provide a lazy way into a group or an easy way of hiding uncertainties and inadequacies: when terminology slips plausibly from the tongue, it is not essential for the brain to keep up. Indeed, it is commonly asserted that politicians and civil servants have developed this skill to professional levels. And certainly, faced with a telling or awkward question, and the need to say something acceptable in public, slipping into jargon becomes a simple way out, and can soon develop into a bad habit. It is a short step, then, to jargon's first cousin, cliché (p. 186).

30 WAYS OF GETTING THE SACK

The following expressions were all used in 1991 by businesses which were having to 'let people go'. Presumably they felt that the jargon would somehow provide justification for their policy, or perhaps it would reduce the trauma for the ex-workforce. In such cases, jargon is taking on the role of euphemism (p. 172).

career change opportunity
chemistry change
coerced transition
decruitment
degrowing
dehiring
deselection
destaffing
downsizing
executive culling
force reduction
indefinite idling
involuntary separation
negotiated departure
outplacement
personnel surplus reduction
redeployment
reducing headcount
redundancy elimination
release
rightsizing
schedule adjustment
selective separation
skill-mix adjustment
transitioned
vocational relocation
voluntary severance
voluntary termination
work force adjustment
work force imbalance correction

OF COURSE IF THE SYSTEMISED MULTIPHASIC IMPUTATION CONFLICTS WITH THE SUBORDINATED MOTIVATIONAL FRAMEWORK IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO UTILISE...

THE RESTRUCTURED TACTICAL PROCEDURE WHILST THE THIRD...

Source : The Encyclopedia of English language by David Crystal.

AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS

The way jargon enters into our lives, often without our even noticing it, can be seen in this short selection of published examples (from W. Nash, 1993).

• ... smells interestingly of flowers and curiously of bath salts, but has tropical fruit on the palate, with rough sauvignon blanc edges absent, except perhaps on the finish

• His breast of chicken with tarragon and girolles goes back to the classic French repertoire: the skin of the fowl crisped to gold, oderiferously swathed in a thick, creamy sauce ...

• ... Labour has to establish its credentials as the party of economic growth, and hang the recession round the neck of the Government's monetary and fiscal stewardship.

• A mere yard off the fairway at the fourth, he could only hack out from the clinging Bermuda rough, three putts adding up to a six. Much the same happened at the par-five sixth for another six.

A famous jargonizer

Literary examples show that jargon is by no means only a modern phenomenon. Here, Hamlet takes issue with Osric over the pretentious use of *carriages* – a term more appropriately used, in Hamlet's estimation, for guns (*cannon*) than for swords.

Osric: The king, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so; three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, of very liberal conceit.

Hamlet : What call you the carriages?

Horatio (aside to Hamlet): I knew you must be edified by the margent ['margin'] ere you had done.

Osric: The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Hamlet: The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers until then. (*Hamlet* V.ii)

FIGHTING BACK

When people get fed up with obscure or unnecessary jargon, there at first seems very little they can do about it. Below are a few examples of the way some people have chosen to counter-attack using the weapons of satire and parody. On p. 176 is an account of the way one organization has successfully orchestrated a much more ambitious campaign.

Q

To be, or the contrary? Whether the former or the latter be preferable would seem to admit of some difference of opinion; the answer in the present case being of an affirmative or of a negative character according as to whether one elects on the one hand to mentally suffer the disfavour of fortune, albeit in an extreme degree, or on the other to boldly envisage adverse conditions in the prospect of bringing them to a conclusion. The condition of sleep is similar to, if not indistinguishable from, that of death; and with the addition of finality the former might be considered identical with the latter; so that in this connection it might be argued with regard to sleep that, could the addition be effected, a termination would be put to the endurance of a multiplicity of inconveniences, not to mention a number of downright evils incidental to our fallen humanity, and thus a consummation achieved of a most gratifying nature.

(According to Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1916.)

CARSPEAK: A SHOPPER'S GUIDE

specimen, a: a very large, very, very shiny, long-nosed motor car with leather seats.

must be seen: a fairly large, shiny car with a host of extras; alt., a rather peculiar foreign model that you might hesitate to buy because of the rumours you have heard.

host of extras: (usu. in conn. with *must be seen*), a sun-roof, stereo speakers, badge bar, and a horn that plays the opening strains of 'Dixie'.

one careful, lady owner: boringly sedate and reliable; unscratched, over-hoovered, taken through the car-wash once a week; called Belinda.

snip, a: a vehicle priced at £50–£100 below the sum the vendor originally thought of, because the reading on the mileometer is suspect, because the alternator is *in articulo mortis* (called, in the trade, 'dead dodgy') and because he needs to get this car off his forecourt in order to make room for a *specimen*.

good runner, a: a vehicle which has not had the benefit of *one careful, lady owner*. It will do you no credit at the Country Club, but will trundle you round the houses well enough. Sometimes abbreviated to *a runner*, in which case it may not be good enough to trundle you all the way round *all* the houses, because it *needs some attention*.

needs some attention: (usu. in conn. with *runner*), needs a new gearbox, clutch, offside rear wing panel, windscreen wiper motor, doorlock and window crank on driver's side; otherwise, in A1 condition.

(According to W. Nash, 1993.)

THE FOLKLORE ARTICLE RECONSTITUTION KIT

This aid to academic article writing was circulated anonymously in the 1970s by a disaffected folklore scholar. Anyone wishing to produce an acceptable paper for a folklore journal, the author contends, has simply to construct sentences from the columns below, in the sequence A-B-C-D.

A
1 Obviously,
2 On the other hand,
3 From the intercultural standpoint,
4 Similarly,
5 As Lévi-Strauss contends,
6 In this regard,
7 Based on my own field-work in Guatemala,
8 For example,
9 Thus, within given parameters,
10 In respect to essential departmental goals,

B
1 a large proportion of intercultural communicative coordination
2 a constant flow of field-collected input ordinates
3 the characterization of critically co-optive criteria
4 initiation of basic charismatic subculture development
5 our fully integrated field program
6 any exponential Folklife coefficient
7 further and associated contradictory elements
8 the incorporation of agonistic cultural constraints
9 my proposed independent structuralistic concept
10 a primary interrelationship between systems and/or subsystems logistics

C
1 must utilize and be functionally interwoven with
2 maximizes the probability of project success while minimizing cross-cultural shock elements in
3 adds explicit performance contours to
4 necessitates that coagulative measures be applied to
5 requires considerable further performance analysis and computer studies to arrive at
6 is holistically compounded, in the context of
7 presents a valuable challenge showing the necessity for
8 recognizes the importance of other disciplines, while taking into account
9 effects a significant implementation of
10 adds overwhelming Folkloristic significance to

D
1 Propp's basic formulation.
2 the anticipated epistemological repercussions.
3 improved subcultural compatibility-testing.
4 all deeper structuralistic conceptualization.
5 any communicatively-programmed computer techniques.
6 the profound meaning of *The Raw and the Cooked*.
7 our hedonic Folklife perspectives over a given time-period.
8 any normative concept of the linguistic / holistic continuum.
9 the total configurational rationale.
10 *Krapp's Last Tape*.

The Doublespeak campaign

During the 1970s in the USA, there was a marked increase in concern about the way jargon was being used to confuse or deceive by people in power. In 1971, the National Council of Teachers of English passed two resolutions on language.

On Dishonest and Inhumane Uses of Language

That the National Council of Teachers of English find means to study dishonest and inhumane uses of language and literature by advertisers, to bring offenses to public attention, and to propose classroom techniques for preparing children to cope with commercial propaganda.

On the Relation of Language to Public Policy

That the National Council of Teachers of English find means to study the relation of language to public policy, to keep track of, publicize, and combat semantic distortion by public officials, candidates for office, political commentators, and all those who transmit through the mass media.

In 1973 the Council decided on its way forward, forming a Committee on Public Doublespeak – a blend of *newspeak + doublethink* from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (p. 135). The Committee focused on classroom activities and on professional awareness, publishing a newsletter (later, the *Quarterly Review of Doublespeak*) and other materials; but its highest public profile came with the birth of the annual Doublespeak Awards in 1974.

So what is doublespeak? In the view of the Committee Chair, it is 'language which pretends to communicate, but really doesn't. It is language which makes the bad seem good, the negative seem positive, the unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility, language which is at variance with its real or its purported meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought' (W. Lutz, 1987). It is stressed that such language is not the product of carelessness or sloppy thinking; rather, it is the result of clear thinking. The claim is that this language has been carefully designed to change reality and to mislead.

Judging by the media attention given to the annual awards, the emergence of similar societies in other countries, the growth in public awareness of the problem, and the way in which many organizations have responded positively to the demand for 'plain English' (p. 376), the campaign to date has been remarkably successful. But, in view of the examples which continue to be cited in the yearly award ceremonies, no one is suggesting that the problem is anywhere near being solved.

AIR SUPPORT

The winner of the first Doublespeak Award in 1974 was Colonel Opfer, the United States Air Force press officer in Cambodia. After a US bombing raid, he told reporters: 'You always write it's bombing, bombing, bombing. It's not bombing! It's air support!'
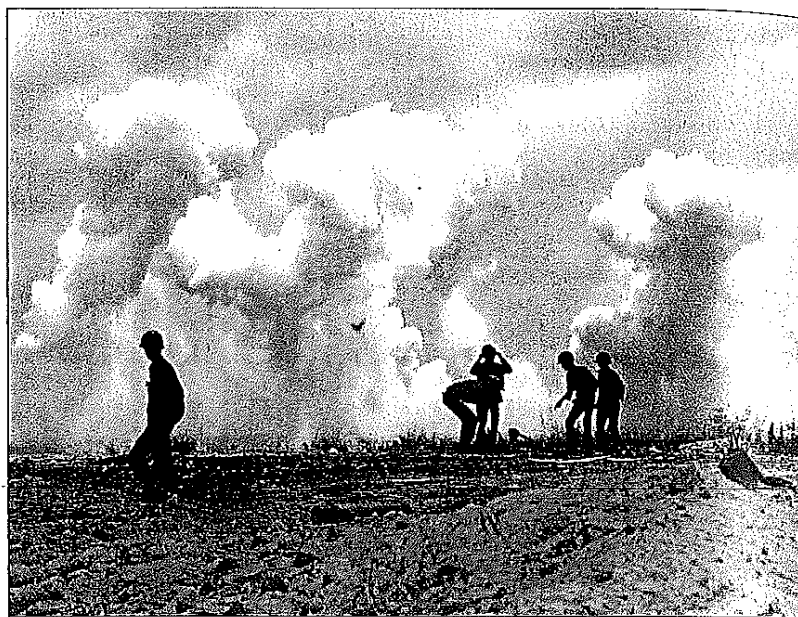
AND SOME OTHER WINNERS

• **1977** The Pentagon and the Energy Research and Development Administration, for explaining that the neutron bomb was 'an efficient nuclear weapon that eliminates an enemy with a minimum degree of damage to friendly territory'.

• **1979** The nuclear power industry, for the euphemisms devised in relation to the incident at Three Mile Island, when an explosion was called 'energetic disassembly', a fire 'rapid oxidation', a reactor accident a 'normal aberration', and plutonium contamination 'infiltration'.

• **1984** The US Department of State, for announcing that in reports on the status of human rights in other countries, the word *killing* would in future be replaced by 'unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life'.

THE GOLDEN BULL AWARDS

These are the British equivalent of the Doublespeak Awards, organized by the Plain English Campaign and the National Consumer Council.

The first plaque was given in 1982 to the author of Section 38 of the Criminal Justice Act, for writing as follows:

(4) An enactment in which section 31 (6) and (7) of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (pre-1949 enactments) produced the same fine or maximum fine for different convictions shall be treated for the purposes of this section as if there were omitted from it so much of it as before 29th July 1977...

The use of 'plain English' involves much more than an avoidance of unnecessary jargon, but must take into account questions of grammar and typography, as this example shows. The issues raised by such examples are therefore discussed later in this book (p. 376).

THE ORWELL AWARDS

It should not always be bad news. While the thrust of the Doublespeak campaign has been directed against language misuse, there have also been efforts to reward those who have helped to direct public attention to the issues, and who themselves use language well.

The Orwell Awards were introduced by the National Council of Teachers of English to recognize a work which has made an outstanding contribution to the critical analysis of public discourse. The first award was given in 1975 to David Wise for his book *The Politics of Lying*. Particularly appropriate to this section was the award given to Dwight Bolinger's book, *Language, the Loaded Weapon* (1980).

A similar concern to develop positive initiatives is found in the UK, where in 1990 the Plain English Campaign introduced the Crystal Mark scheme to recognize clarity in written documents (p. 376). The choice of this title, it is believed, does not derive from the name of any linguistics author living or dead.