

The Scourge of Buzzwords

by [Kenneth Francis](#) (September 2019)



Every time I hear buzzwords on the radio, TV, or spot them in newsprint, I roll my eyes in despair and reach for my M2 flamethrower. Surely the ‘chattering classes’ can be more creative with their language? In fact, using such words tells us more about groupthink bondage than it does about their lack of creative writing. During the Irish boom of the early-noughties, the term ‘Celtic Tiger’ was used in financial reports like confetti at a wedding, if you’ll pardon the well-worn idiom. Thankfully, during subsequent booms it became less fashionable. It seems every era is guilty of irritating buzzwords. Here is a list of what I believe to be some common examples of annoying jargon, both in broadcast and print journalism.

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Existential threat: It seems nearly everything now in the world where conflict lies is an existential threat, according to the ‘intelligentsia’. For the metaphorically challenged, the words conjure up an image of Jean Paul Sartre, dressed in black polo-neck sweater and wearing beret and sunglasses, about to mug Martin Heidegger, sitting in a Parisian café sipping coffee back in the mid-1950s. But for the luvvies of the ‘chattering classes’, it’s essential to use these words to remind listeners and readers that they are in tune with the linguistic

zeitgeist. Just like the phrase 'brutal murder', such adjectives are tautological.

Kicking the can down the road: If ever a politician needed to be kicked down the road, it's for using such a phrase that's become hackneyed on a Himalayan scale. Why not avoid it and just used the plain word 'avoid'?

Symbiotic: This used to be a term reserved for the fields of biology, from the Greek 'living together'. Many biological organisms dependent on each other, or parasitic, are subject to symbiotic attachment. But the word made its way into the corporate sector, where almost every business relationship is symbiotic. One hardly thinks of the image of a Great White CEO running down the corridor naked with several staff members, like marine leeches, stuck to his body.

It's not rocket science: The actress Emma Thompson recently said she is done with men who don't know how to interact with women after the rise of the #MeToo movement. "Get a grip guys," she said, "it's not rocket science," the *Late Night* star said in an interview with the [@NERIconoclast](#)