

## English for diplomatic purposes (a review)

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At first sight the title of the book seems a bit of a misnomer. It sounds like an English teaching manual for diplomatic staff. In fact, it is far more than that, it is more a series of academic research essays on using language diplomatically and is useful for business people, teachers of general English and, yes, teachers of diplomats and members of international organisations. In doing so it discusses important issues in language use, such as ‘non-killing linguistics’, ‘peace linguistics’, negotiations and how to combine ‘force and grace’ in making your intentions clear, ‘the iron fist in the velvet glove’ as one author, Bilyana Scott, memorably describes it.

As well as offering her own contributions, editor Patricia Friedrich, has brought together the research and experience of a group of academics from around the world, including Professor Emeritus Gomes de Matos, a leader in the international peace movement. The eight essays in the book contain discussions of applied linguistics

theory but also practical activities that can be used in language and communication classes with adult learners. It is a thoughtful and practical commentary on the language all of us probably use from time to time and how to humanise our use of language and make it more compassionate.

The book progresses from a discussion of how to soften language used to avoid creating opposition to the role and purpose of World Englishes and English as a lingua franca and ends with articles on the teaching on language for international diplomats and organisations. Although the focus is on diplomats and international organisations the principles and practice activities in the book are also adaptable for English for business communication and general English CEFR B2-C1 level and even for native speakers.

In the opening essay, ‘Towards a non-killing linguistics’ Friedrich and Gomes de Matos demonstrate how much language uses violent

words and expressions to present ideas and opinions. A 'killer fact' is really just a conclusive or convincing fact. In their article, the authors cite many examples in daily use, such as 'making a killing on the stockmarket', 'I'm dying for a cup of coffee', or 'I'd kill for a cup of tea', 'the politician was stabbed in the back by his party' or 'a blonde bombshell' (sexist as well as violent). Also, they point out, we regularly refer to the 'battle between the sexes' or 'the war of words'.

The argument is that at school and in business and politics we do better to teach students to wean themselves away from such language and to choose more positive words and expressions, a movement they term, 'non-killing linguistics' or 'peace linguistics'. In making their case cogently and clearly, they argue for two core principles. First, 'language is a system for communicating in non-killing ways' and second language users should have the right to learn to communicate non-killingly for the good of humankind'. A feature of each article is that, as well as explaining the principles, the authors also suggest activities that teacher can use in class to put the ideas into practice. For example, Noriko Ishihara shows how to disagree defiantly and by contrast, agreeably and gives examples of what she describes as 'mitigated disagreement' by showing respect for the person you disagree with. This is an argument developed by Josette LeBlanc in her article on using 'compassionate English.' In doing so LeBlanc

also analyses the process of NVC (Non-Violent Communication) developed by the psychologist Marshall Rosenberg and shows how it can be used in class.

The middle of the book focuses much more on the use of English as a lingua franca worldwide, focusing initially on the use of English as the official language of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and the growing use of English as an international language in business and politics in the region. This then extends to a discussion of English as a world language and reinforces the concept of 'Englishes' as opposed to 'one English language' using Braj Kachru's analysis of world Englishes and his observation that many more people use English as a second or foreign language than as a native language. This leads on to an extended discussion of the language of negotiation, especially in the field of international diplomacy, where Danton Ford and Kim Luksetich explore in detail the language involved at each stage of negotiation from introductions, objectives and agenda setting, to stating positions and asking questions making proposals and concessions and reaching agreement.

They also address the language of dealing with difficult situations and managing different types of conflict resolution. Once again, a valuable part of this article is the suggested activities to put different processes of negotiation into action and

how to reflect on results. The material is useful both for diplomats and other professional environments and in spite of examples using the English language, the principles are readily adaptable to other languages.

The two final chapters in the book focus mainly on training diplomats.

Bilyana Scott in 'Force and Grace' explains the language of making your point through logical thinking, clear definition of terms and reasoned argument. That is force, 'the iron fist'. She then explains the importance of grace, acknowledgement of the other party, showing respect for their position, authority and expertise and what she describes as 'face space', giving the other person choice and space to answer by the type of questions you ask. This is 'the velvet glove'. She gives examples using Nigel Farage of UKIP and former MEP (Member of the European Parliament) in the EU parliament and the BBC interviewer Jeremy Paxman's famous interrogation of the then Home Office Secretary of State, Michael Howard, asking him the same direct question a dozen times. Howard later explained

that Paxman had to fill in time because his next studio guest hadn't turned up. Nevertheless, his repeated direct question gave Howard no 'face time' to formulate and present his answer in an appropriate way. Scott provides activities for illustrating both 'force' and 'grace' strategies and how to combine the two and she concludes with a case study of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the UK former ambassador to the UN and how he employed both strategies in debate.

In conclusion, Professor Gomes de Matos describes 20 activities aimed at encouraging what he describes as a 'positive pedagogy' by teachers. It is encouraging that it is clear from internal references that the contributors to this book have taken the opportunity to read and refer to the other authors, not a common feature of edited volumes containing separately commissioned papers around a theme.

To end this review where it started, don't think this is just a valuable guide for language teachers working in the field of diplomacy and international relations. It also has value in other professional areas as well.