Writing diplomatically: Managing potential conflict

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The aim of this paper is to assess the role of emotional language and neutral language in the preparation and production of formal official documents. The paper explores the model offered by the United Nations in two references of diplomatic writing, The United Nations Editorial Manual and the United Nations Correspondence Manual. The example selected, from many that could be chosen, is that of Arabic-speaking diplomatic students responding in writing to a simulated political incident that could lead to conflict. The discussion examines the importance of emotional intelligence in managing one's own feelings and hence the language one uses. It also offers a methodology teachers can use in helping students become aware of emotive usage in reading passages and in their own writing and how to manage it. The conclusion stresses the importance of avoiding emotive language in official correspondence and finding ways of substituting it with more neutral words and expressions to achieve balance.

KEYWORDS: *Arabic, linguistics, UN, diplomacy, conflict management, tweetplomacy, emotional intelligence, critical awareness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomats are the guardians of a nation's heritage and interests. When states are in conflict or are steering towards a potential conflict situation, it is the diplomats who keep the doors open to discussion, often behind the scenes, in order to seek ways towards a peaceful settlement. An important means of achieving this is to employ the appropriate language, neutral and objective and frequently indirect – in short, the diplomatic language. This is important in public discourse, whatever diplomats might say in private, and strong messages may be delivered using polite language. An important part of diplomatic training courses is raising critical awareness of what is the right and wrong way to use language and how to observe the protocol of what type of communication to use and what language is appropriate. Contrary to some opinions, diplomatic language is not mindless bureaucracy, but an important tool in the successful management of international relations. What works for diplomats can also work for international business and negotiation, and the case study offered here is intended as an aide to teachers in understanding the principles and

practice of diplomatic language.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The paper outlines the key features of the UN guide to diplomatic correspondence in English through the key modes of written communication and compares it with the use of rhetoric in one of the working languages of the UN – Arabic. It then takes an exercise in preparing diplomatic correspondence with a group of Arabic-speaking students as a basis for how strong feelings and the style of expressing them needs to be adapted to fit the norms of diplomatic communication.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Diplomatic communication

Diplomatic correspondence is one of the keys to formal contact between states and between states and international organisations (e.g. the UN). The aim is to ensure diplomatic communication continues to take place. Diplomatic communication fulfils a number of functions, some of the most important being to communicate decisions, express approval or disapproval, congratulate, confirm arrangements, initiate contact, make proposals, and threaten.

In this paper, we explore the expression of disapproval and the use of threat and the language used to convey it. However, our first question has to be why, when and how does diplomatic communication take place. Diplomatic

correspondence takes place whenever official communication is needed between states and between states and international organisations. The most important function of diplomatic correspondence is to keep a record of agreements, decisions and positions taken (Marshall, 1997).

3.2 How does diplomatic correspondence take place?

According to Barston (2014), the most common forms of diplomatic correspondence are notes or notes verbales, letters, memoranda, and aides-memoires. A more formal approach is used in the categories of communication such as resolutions, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and treaties. Types of communication such as reports and briefings, speeches, statements, communiques, press interviews, and declarations are also used in diplomatic and official correspondence. Each type of communication has a particular style of address and particular qualities of approach. Common to all diplomatic writing is the focus on respect for the recipient, objectivity of observation and analysis, and often the use of the 3rd person to allow focus on the problem, not the personality.

Notes verbales form part of a correspondence. Their function is to bring an agreement into effect. Although in Japan and in UN correspondence they are called Notes verbale, there is no significant difference with note, as used in the UK, the US or

most of Europe. Notes or notes verbale are often used for routine administration, such as registration of treaties, granting or refusing overflight clearance, peace proposals, but also official protests, for example a record of a state's position regarding a dispute. The linguistic devices used are very important. First of all, the form of address is usually third person singular. The style tends to be very formal, using phrases such as *the Embassy of … presents its compliments …, the Embassy avails itself of the opportunity to…*, etc. The note is usually initialled, but not signed and the paragraphs are not numbered (Barston, 2014).

Letters are exchanged direct between Head of State and Head of State or with an international body. Their function is to raise questions about or explain policy, set out positions and intended lines of action, establish intent to initiate agreement, MOU (memorandum of understanding or a treaty) or (through the UN) to establish a complaint or defend policy or advance a case. A letter is a more personal correspondence, addressed personally to the recipient, often directly between Heads of State and dated. Therefore, there is a more common use of *I* and *you* and the communication is likely to be signed with a full signature followed by typed name and position at the foot of the letter, rather than initialled.

A memorandum is a detailed statement of acts and arguments and may be a statement of policy

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supporting claims, a warning, a statement making policy recommendations and it may be used to explain detail on specific treaty or agreement clauses where greater detail is needed. The characteristics of a memorandum are that it may be supported by a covering letter and is similar to, but less formal than a note, with no opening or closing formalities and no signature is necessary.

Aides-memoires are official statements used as follow-up to visits, trade fairs, conferences, etc. to propose initiatives as a result of discussions and as a record of administration and policy commitments. They are usually written in the 3rd person, but less formal than memoranda and are based on discussions. Speaking notes may be used to record the conclusions of a telephone call.

Resolutions are formal statements often used by international organisations as a result of conferences and summits.

Communiques are an official record of discussions

between Heads of Government, usually compiled soon after meetings and covering the agenda of the meeting as a whole. Their key style qualities are accuracy, selectivity, speed, short paragraphs, and space between paragraphs. They may use sub headings, if appropriate. It is important in communiqués to keep it simple. Marshall (1997) advises avoiding complicated sentences (15-25 words is ample) and writes: *'If you cannot easily read your reports aloud they are probably not as clear as they should be'* (Marshall, 1997, p. 161).

An Memorandum of Understanding is used for regulating external relations with outside Ministry of Foreign Affairs agencies. They are used to follow up treaties and for detailing implementation procedures and may be kept internal to preserve confidentiality of information. Their style tends to be more informal than agreements or treaties and this may on occasion pose problems. A principle issue is terminology, which may differ from state to state and department to department. There is often a possible difficulty of retrieval. Where are documents stored? The documents may create low norm setting and lack of consistency, and worst of all there may be issue of confidentiality and secrecy leading to poor foreign policy co-ordination.

The final area of diplomatic communication to discuss is that of briefings. These are papers designed to advise and inform foreign ministries

and Heads of Government on policy and procedure. A briefing should explain the background and areas to which the briefing applies and that need to be dealt with, list policy and procedure options with positives and negatives, and finally advise on best options.

3.3 Guiding principles of diplomatic writing

The guiding principle of diplomatic language are provided by the United Nations in two key documents. One is the United Nations Correspondence Manual (United Nations, 2000) and the other is The United Nations Editorial Manual (United Nations, 2014). Both documents are available online. The United Nations Editorial Manual Online is intended to serve as an authoritative statement of the style to be followed in drafting, editing and reproducing United Nations documents, publications and other written material. The United Nations Correspondence Manual identifies the correct way to address officials at different levels of state and international organisation governance.

In exploring the diplomatic writing process, we will look at protocol, preparation, making an argument, persuasion and confidentiality.

3.4 Protocol

Protocol is fundamental to diplomacy. Four key issues need to be addressed in any diplomatic document of the types described above.

1. *Symbols*. Should the document have official symbols such as coats of arms, official logos, etc.? These can add to the formality of a document.

2. *Terms of address*. This has already been discussed in the description of the main types of diplomatic document. Is the document personal or general? Should it be addressed using the 1st person singular or the third person singular or plural? The Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Government?

3. *Structure and layout*. What is the expected structure of the document? It will have an introduction, content and a conclusion, but should it have single-spaced or double-space lines and how should paragraphs be differentiated? All this becomes part of diplomatic practice.

4. *Sign off*. Different types of documents follow different conventions. Should they be signed or left unsigned? If they are signed, should the signature include full names or just initials?

3.5 Preparation

Apart from the protocol element, the preparation of a diplomatic document needs careful thought, as it will remain on record for years, maybe even centuries, to come. For any diplomat, there are three key questions to consider. What is the message you wish to convey? Who do you wish to convey it to? What sort of message do you wish to

convey? (Marshall, 1997). In answering the first question, the key principle is to include what is essential, not what is desirable. *'Our job is to deal with the essential and to convey it in its most coherent, concise and persuasive form'* (Marshall, 1997, p. 156). Have a beginning, middle and end. Precision is important. What can be left out? An orderly, accurate and complete message achieves balance with the key delivery points. Never sacrifice clarity and bravity. Start the reader on the right path and encourage them to keep on it. The first sentence is crucial. Have a sense of priorities. Have a clear temporal sequence. Group related ideas and thoughts. The core of the message must always be in focus. It is a good idea to write down your essential message in one or two sentences and make sure you lead up to it (Marshall, 1997).

3.6 Making an argument

According to Marshall (1997), an argument can be 4 things:

1) a statement of fact advanced to influence the mind and support a proposition;
2) a connected series of statements intended to establish (or subvert) a position and hence a process of reasoning;
3) an argument establishing the pros and cons of a proposition, discussion or debate;
4) the summary of a conference, discussion or debate.

Different tools can be used to strengthen an

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argument. They include illustration with examples, describing situations briefly or in detail, adding new but relevant information to clarify a point, varying approach and style, and laying devil's advocate and then demolishing the argument (Marshall,1997).

3.7 Confidentiality

This is one of the key issues in any diplomatic correspondence. Who should be allowed to read it? A number of linguistic devices exist to establish confidentiality. Some common examples include:

- Eyes only (for your eyes only)
- Private and confidential
- Classified information
- Circulation restricted
- Information embargoed until (DATE)
- Information released under Chatham House Rule (Chatham House is the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, based in Chatham House; under the Chatham House rule nothing said in a meeting can be attributed outside it. Everything should remain internal).

Other ways of preserving confidentiality are to ask recipients of a confidential or sensitive document to sign non-disclosure agreements or for the distributor of the document to blot out potentially controversial or politically sensitive words and phrases so that the reader cannot access them. This is called redacting a document (Barston, 2014). If, however, a leak occurs, it is important to have the original (safe) version of the document available in case information has been manipulated or quoted out of context.

3.8 The Arabic language

Arabic is one of the most beautiful and expressive languages in the world, and the native language of more than two hundred million people. It is also the official language of twenty countries and the language of the holy Qur'an. In 1973, it became the sixth official language of the United Nations and is the fourth most widely spoken language in the world (Nydell, 2002).

Arabic is a Semitic language, along with Hebrew and Amharic (Ethiopia) and Aramaic, Syrian and Chaldean, which are still spoken in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq (Nydell, 2002). Many words in English come from Arabic, including *coffee, saffron, ginger, apricot* and *sherbet,* and also many words beginning with *al*, of which the most famous is probably, *algebra* but also *algorithm* and *almanac.*

'The true heritage of Arabia can be found in its

language. In the harsh desert environment which was not conducive to the development of fine arts, the cultivation of language became an art form in itself. Even today poetry and eloquence hold a revered place' (Cuddihy, 2002, p. 55-56). The important point is the use of language to convey emotion. As Cuddihy (2002, p. 56) says, *'Arabic is not merely a tool for conceptualisation, it is a vehicle to convey atmosphere and emotion'.*

There are different varieties of Arabic, ranging from different regional varieties to classical spoken and written Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, originating in the Hijaz region of Arabia. Classical or modern standard Arabic, as it is now known, is the most important variety.

What is important for this study is that classical Arabic places great value on rhetoric. Arabic is sometimes described as a 'flowery' language. In other words, it rejoices in the creative, rhetorical use of language expressing the speaker or writer's eloquence. This is opposite to the normal use of English, which frequently disparages rhetoric.

On the contrary, in Arab politics how you say something is as important as what you say. The use of Arabic allows rhetoric to be used, sometimes in a disparaging way with threats, promises, exaggeration and slogans, whereas English tends to avoid it, although that is changing with the popular press and the rise of populist rhetoric.

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'Westerners are not in everyday speech given as Arabs are, to quoting poetry, ancient proverbs and extracts from holy books. Perhaps the greatest difference between the Levantine approach to language and that of Westerners is that Levantines, like most Arabs, take pleasure in using language for its own sake' (McLoughlin, 2008, p. 62).

'Poetry continues to play a central role in Arab daily life and it is often said that poetry is the book of the Arabs. To this extent, linguistic eloquence is always appreciated by Arabs, whereby style and delivery can be as important as content' (Al-Omari, 2008, p. 82).

'Another important feature of the Arabic language is that it is a poetical language in a very big way. In everyday use, the language is full of idioms, euphemisms, proverbs and flowery phrases that will baffle and sometimes confuse most foreigners. Finally, when Arabs communicate in writing, their language tends to be both elaborate and formal, which can send conflicting messages to the untrained reader' (Al-Omari, 2008, p. 83).

Translation is a problem. There are certain words in Arabic that are not immediately translatable and the language needs a translator who can preserve the key message, but without being too literal.

This study examines how this difference in the use of rhetoric influences diplomatic writing in English. By definition, diplomatic writing is diplomatic and conforms by and large to the guidelines laid down by the United Nations. It advocates the avoidance of 'strong language' and sets out a form of phraseology which makes a state's position reasonably clear while avoiding any kind of extreme or potentially provocative expression, particularly through the use of rhetoric. It explores the language used by trainee diplomats responding to a diplomatic relations crisis and examines the relationship between UN conventional forms of expression and the use of potentially provocative rhetoric conveyed through the use of emotive adjectives and adverbs, nouns and verb phrases. It also recognises that the use of certain words might be due to the misunderstanding of dictionary or thesaurus translations and suggests ways in which diplomats and other writers can learn to use less emotive and more precise descriptive language in their communication.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

The study is the result of a course in diplomatic writing conducted for trainee diplomats from the Arab world. The aim of the course was to teach students to manage the United Nations Correspondence Manual and the United Nations Editorial Manual, discussed above. At the end of the course the students completed a short exam, which involved three types of test. First was a gapfill activity in which students had to insert the correct diplomatic phrase into a letter from a British Ambassador to the Head of the Central Bank of the country he or she was stationed in. A second gapfill activity requested the students to complete an official communiqué using words listed. The third activity involved re-ordering the sentences of a UN note verbale regarding the violation of airspace in Bosnia Herzegovina.

The final activity was a free style writing task. It involved writing a note verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in English, to the Foreign Minister of another country whose air force jets had 'buzzed' (flown very close in order to intimidate) two national airliners flying in international airspace.

Using the United Nations Correspondence Manual, the note verbale might have read something like this.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of STATE sends his compliments to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of STATE and wishes to express its concern over reports of disruption to the flight path of two

international airliners by fighter jets from STATE.

The incident, which occurred on DATE and took place in international air space, caused considerable concern to aircrew and passengers alike and may constitute a violation of international airspace regulations.

The ministry avails itself of the opportunity to request the ministry of STATE to urgently investigate the occurrence.

Notice the use of the 3rd person and the formulaic phrases, which act to establish respect as in, *sends his compliments, ministry avails itself of the opportunity*. The accusation is similarly expressed in an indirect style using the phrase, *wishes to express its concern*. It explains the issues as far as the airliner passengers and crew were concerned, politely but firmly, using the phrase, *caused considerable concern to aircrew and passengers alike*. It also contains a threat, but one which is expressed indirectly, as in the phrase, *may constitute a violation of international airspace regulations*. The note finishes with a request, once again wrapped in very polite terms, as in, *the ministry avails itself of the opportunity...*

34 students completed the test and all did well. However, the weakest point was the composition of the note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protesting the violation of airspace by its air

force jets. Although the opening paragraph followed by and large the format proposed above, the description of the incident and its possible consequences were effectively a breach of diplomatic language and used words expressing emotion and anger, which may have been seen as out of place in a diplomatic exchange. Of the 34 drafts examined, eight maintained a degree of neutrality while expressing concern over the incident. 26, however, felt it necessary to express their concern in a stronger fashion. In the examples that follow the numbers in brackets after the italicised phrases indicate the number of times a word or phrase was used in the correspondence.

Three letters used expressions describing the behaviour of the state that had 'buzzed' the airliners, such as *aggressive behaviour* (2) and *categorically unacceptable behaviour*. In this case more diplomatic language might refer to *behaviour which has caused concern*. Twelve letters referred to *actions or acts as hostile* (10), *a clear act of aggression and conflict* and *unacceptable acts*. In this case it might have been better to avoid the outright accusation of aggression and focus on the effects on the crew and passengers with a phrase like *caused the crew and passengers acute fear and discomfort*.

Three letters used the word *threat* accompanied once again by 'undiplomatic' adjectives. Examples are *a violent explicit threat, a violent explicit threat*

to the lives of innocent civilians and *a clear violent threat*. More muted expressions of displeasure were contained in seven communications, as follows: *is very disappointed*, *this action is not the best* and *gravely disappointed* (5). In all cases the notion of intentional threat should be avoided as the intention is not proven. The key is to focus on the physical event and, if the writer wishes, its effect on the passenger and crew, which can be documented, and not on the intentions of the fighter jets or the state to whose air force they belonged as that isn't known for sure although it may be suspected.

Intensifiers were used in a number of communications to strengthen the expression of outrage at the incident. Here are some examples. *The STATE protests strongly against the STATE's behaviour, …strongly urges the government to reconsider its categorically unacceptable behaviour, …strongly denounces the aggressive behaviour of STATE airforce, …constitutes a flagrant infringement of sovereignty, protest categorically, categorically not accepted* and *violates the law of international airspace.* A more legally neutral expression nevertheless includes a 'strong' word *violation* as a noun in *constitutes violations of safety/ international law* (2). These simply need to be left out for the reasons stated above, no proof.

Finally, a number of communications clearly state

the likelihood of reprisals, as in these examples: in the light of evidence of its hostile acts, *this aggressive action, if it re-occurs in future, will force the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take unpleasant action to protect our people, any further such acts could trigger a response by STATE and …. will not hesitate to take necessary measures* (2). This last example is a firm but more acceptable phraseology, but it is nonetheless a threat. Threats by all means, but they need to be kept within the confines of international law. What are they talking about? Armed conflict, denial of overfly rights or withdrawal of diplomatic relations? The most likely threat is recourse to international law, but the state concerned doesn't have enough evidence yet. So, a consequence may be hinted at, but cannot be stated in either specific or general terms.

In summary, this relatively small sample shows how even in a diplomatic environment declamatory and emotional expressions of strong feeling can find their way into diplomatic correspondence. The key linguistic devices used to express feelings are adjectives and adjectival phrases (e.g. *aggressive, flagrant, unpleasant, violent, unacceptable*), adverbs and adverbial phrases (e.g. *categorically, strongly*), nouns and noun phrases (e.g. *violation, infringement, threat, aggression*), and verbs and verb phrases (e.g. *violate, force, trigger, denounce, take unpleasant action*).

In addition, the placing together of certain words creates a phrase intended to intensify the expression of anger at the incident, as in: *categorically unacceptable, violent explicit, clear violent,* and *flagrant infringement.*

This paper has taken as a case study the situation of Arabic-speaking trainee diplomats, but in fact diplomats speaking any language are in danger of overreacting, especially if faced with actions which might put their citizens in danger. The question is how do we teach trainee diplomats and indeed all foreign language students how to recognise and tone down possibly provocative language.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Using emotional intelligence

Although the state whose airliners were 'buzzed' by opposition fighters had a right to be angry, diplomatic correspondence is not the place to express it. Diplomacy is all about reading between the lines. A diplomat will understand immediately what lies behind the neutral phraseology and measured language and protocol of a communication. No one denies international incidents such as these give rise to strong feelings, but in diplomatic correspondence these feelings need to be expressed in carefully considered, neutral language, and with allowances made for the so-called emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as

the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Developed and publicised by Harvard psychologist Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence consists of five qualities, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2006).

Self-awareness is the ability to recognise and understand personal moods and emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others. Indicators of self-awareness include self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and a self-deprecating sense of humour. Self-awareness depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotional state and to correctly identify one's emotions.

Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting. Indicators include trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity and openness to change.

Internal motivation is a quality that allows one to recognise what is personally important in one's life, a joy in doing something, curiosity in learning and a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Indicators include a strong achievement drive, optimism and a commitment

to organisation.

Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, a skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Empathic people tend to be good at intercultural sensitivity and concern, or care or a wish to soften negative emotions or experiences in others. Indicators are an ability to search for and find common ground and build rapport (Goleman, 2006).

The process of understanding emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) is explained below (Table 1).

Table 1

The process of understanding emotional intelligence

	Awareness of emotions	Management of emotions
Self	Self-awareness	Self-management
Others	Social awareness	Relationship management

In relation to oneself, the key is understanding one's own emotions and feelings. That leads to social awareness of others' feelings and needs. As a result of growing awareness of oneself, one learns to manage one's own emotions and ultimately better manage one's relationship with others. Feelings and expression are very closely linked, so understanding one's own feelings can lead to a better understanding of the right language to use in a response to a situation and a better use of appropriate language to manage situations which might reflect or lead to conflict.

5.2 Social media and 'tweetplomacy'

There are arguments to suggest that in the world of governance and statecraft the use of political language has changed and, in the opinion of many, coarsened, as much more emotional and even derogatory language has entered politicians' discourse, partly as a result of the increasing use of social media by politicians aiming to reach their public.

There is much discussion as to whether electronic forms of communication can be considered diplomatic. These relatively new forms of communication, such as tweets, emails, blogs and vlogs, may not be seriously considered as official diplomatic correspondence, but they are very influential and the danger is the text can be easily

manipulated for political purposes, if only to maintain public presence and get you and publicise your state's and maybe your opinions. They have become essential means of expressing views on events and a way of communicating with the public.

Known by many as 'tweetplomacy', the media used are Twitter, emails, Facebook posts, blogs and vlogs. The principal Twitter political communicator in the world right now is President Donald Trump of the United States, although he is far from the only one. Trump, however, is notorious for the way he expresses his views directly, emotionally and often quite rudely in making disparaging comments about those he disapproves of, such as *'Sleepy Joe' Biden* (Democratic contender for the Presidential Election in 2020), or 'crooked Hillary' (to describe his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, in the 2106 presidential election). Trump also referred to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, as 'a disaster' and 'a national disgrace' in his tweets criticising Khan's difficulties in controlling an outbreak of knife-crime in London, leading to the death and injury of a number of mainly young people. It remains to be seen whether the rise of 'tweetplomacy' will continue or whether there will be a backlash and maybe an attempt by the UN or other agencies to establish norms and styles considered more suitable to diplomatic and governmental online public discourse.

'It remains to be seen whether the rise of 'tweetplomacy' will continue or whether there will be a backlash and maybe an attempt by the UN or other agencies to establish norms and styles considered more suitable to diplomatic and governmental online public discourse'

5.3 A methodology for developing critical awareness of language

What is important in diplomatic language is to avoid emotive language, particularly, adjectives, intensifiers (particularly adverbs), nouns and verbs in favour of more neutral and indirect language, which nevertheless conveys the facts, the seriousness of the situation, the evidence and possible actions and outcomes, without, however, adding insult to injury. So, as a teacher, advising students on how to avoid the use of emotive language in official communication while making your point clearly, how should one proceed? Here are five steps.

RECOGNISE. Select words and phrases from a text (written assignment or reading passage) that contain possibly emotive language. Present it to the students. If it's from a written assignment, don't identify the student who wrote it.

ANALYSE. Analyse the words or phrases. What do they mean? What emotions are they trying to express and with what force?

MANAGE. Ask the group to find alternative words and phrases that express the same sense, but in a more neutral fashion (e.g. instead of *blasted*, use *criticised*, instead of *thwarted*, use *rejectedI*.

REFLECT. Ask the students what they have learned and as a result what they will do, say (write) and, most importantly, think differently in future in a similar situation.

CRITICAL THINKING. Ask students to bring examples into class of texts where they feel the language is unbalanced with regard to the situation or people described. Ask them to find more neutral words and phrases to use as substitutions.

This is a very valuable exercise in raising critical awareness among intermediate and advanced language students and enabling them to critically evaluate what they read and what they write. Fifteen minutes once a week will have a definite effect on raising critical awareness of language.

6. CONCLUSION

All languages use rhetoric to express feelings and engage their audiences. This paper has chosen examples from Arabic speakers, but could have

'What is important in diplomatic language is to avoid emotive language in favour of more neutral and indirect language, which nevertheless conveys the facts, the seriousness of the situation, the evidence and possible actions and outcomes, without adding insult to injury'

come from any language community. It has also identified the role of a more neutral and balanced use of language in both national and international situations, especially where observation, critical analysis and balance are important, and explained how the United Nations approach has established norms for international language use for the official languages of the UN. It has also examined a case study of letters responding to a potential international incident drafted by Arabic-speaking students of diplomacy working in English, and has identified the use of emotive language and suggested how it can be modified to offer a more neutral and balanced approach. Finally, the paper has suggested a methodology teachers can use to raise critical awareness and encourage good practice in the drafting of official correspondence. Strong feelings are inevitable and frequently commendable, but balanced delivery is paramount in the maintenance of positive international relations, especially in diplomacy.

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