(https://www.diplomacy.edu/)

Language and diplomacy

Welcome to the portal dedicated to Language and Diplomacy

It has often been said that language is not only an instrument of communication, but the very essence of diplomacy. Diplomats engage in negotiations, persuasion, presentation, and communication, all of which necessitate language skills for the effective conduct of diplomatic work. Both the written and the spoken language require the mastering of concepts and skills, and need to consider message and context. Language can also serve as a form of action: when we warn, threaten, promise, suggest, agree, advise or otherwise, we are *doing* something, and not merely *saying* something. The role of the unsaid in communication (the meaningful silence) is equally crucial.

Language is as much important today as it was to the first envoys and negotiators. Today, technology is continuously shaping certain aspects of language and diplomacy, with the introduction of new tools for communication and interpretation, novel ways of capturing and preserving diplomatic documents, and methods that facilitate online negotiations. Despite the changes, core issues remain fundamental to the practice of diplomacy.

(https://www.diplomacy.edu/calendar/workshop-implicit-communication)Language and Diplomacy online course (Oct-Dec 2018)



What makes one set of words more convincing than another, and how can language best be put to work in the service of diplomacy and international relations?

This course promotes language awareness as a means of improving the skills of opinion shapers. Close attention is paid to case studies of treaties, presidential speeches, public announcements, government advertising and media materials in order to link theoretical discussion to practical examples. Since effective communication has much to do with reading intentions and contexts correctly, insights are provided into relevant cultural, social and psychological variables.

Read more and apply here (/courses/language).

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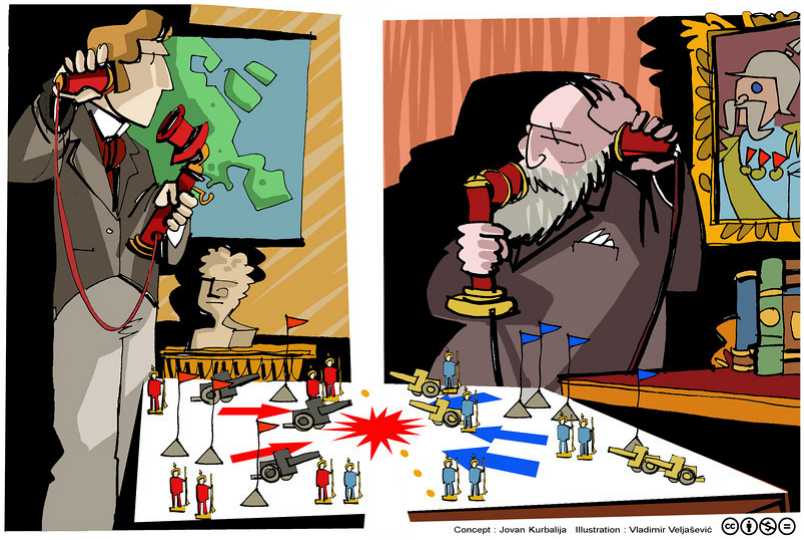
Multimedia

Resource: Ambiguities, analogies, signalling

Resource: Persuasion, the Essence of Diplomacy

What's next?

Why is language important to diplomacy?



(https://diplo.smugmug.com/ILLUSTRATIONS/Diplomacy/Evolution/i-F4MRXrs)

Language is one of our most basic instincts. From birth humans communicate, at first in order to survive - to ensure that needs are met. But at an amazing rate communication becomes refined into language, one of the defining characteristics of human beings. In *The Language Instinct* Stephen Pinker writes:

In any natural history of the human species, language would stand out as the pre-eminent trait... A common language connects the members of a community into an information-sharing network with formidable collective powers. Anyone can benefit from the strokes of genius, lucky accidents, and trial-and-error wisdom accumulated by everyone else, present or past. And people can work in teams, their efforts coordinated by negotiated agreements. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994, 16)

Expand

Speech Acts theory



(https://diplo.smugmug.com/ILLUSTRATIONS/Diplomacy/Evolution/i-cPrmLGK)Popular dichotomy views words as distinct from actions. Yet, language can also serve as a form of action. The Speech Act theory shows that not only do words have the power to give rise to actions, but many utterances are a form of action in themselves.

This approach to language as action is significant for diplomacy, since it confirms that diplomatic interventions and communications are not just a means to an end, but may be ends in themselves: diplomats act on the world through language. It is therefore important to understand what exactly they are doing by means of the language they use.

The Speech Act theory invites us to distinguish between an act *of* saying something, what one does *in* saying it, and what one achieves *by* saying it. It also distinguishes between direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are either flagged by set phrases such as '*hereby*', or by explicit mention, as in '*I promise, I warn you*' etc. In the case of indirect speech acts, the intention of the speaker has to be inferred from context.

Persuasion and rhetoric

The aim of persuasion is to change the attitudes and associated behaviour of another party in line with one's own beliefs or purpose. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is the practice and study ofthe linguistic resources which help speakers to achieve their objectives. The study of rhetoric has traditionally been understood under three headings: (1) *pathos* (Greek 'emotion'), generally referred to as an 'appeal to emotions,'and which includes the ability to engage the sympathy and imagination of one's audience; (2) '*logos*' (Gk. 'word'), namely the appeal to reasoned argument, which involves the felicitous choice of words, the use of logical thinking and sound argumentation; and (3) '*ethos*', which is an appeal to the good character of the speaker: their credibility, experience, knowledge and authority; the genuineness of their stated interests and objectives and the nature of their evidence. If we were to recast the traditional terms of rhetoric into the jargon of today, we might say that *pathos* translates as 'soft persuasion', *logos* as 'hard persuasion', and the judicial combination of the two, combined with *ethos*, as 'smart persuasion'.

Overlaps are inevitable between appeals to argument and to emotion since rhetoric involves drawing on all the resources of language in order to persuade one's audience, and these resources do not come neatly pre-packaged. The traditional headings indicate general dynamics, not discrete categories. Thus logical fallacies, for instance, are usually thought of as a form of faulty logic, but they constitute the staple of propaganda due to their rousing emotional content. Similarly, the choice of the 'right word' may be thought of as a rational exercise – certainly Classical rhetoric assigned it to '*logos*' and the appeal to reason – yet the 'stories in a capsule' contained in connotations and metaphors also centrally belong to the study of emotional appeal, or *pathos*.

Expand

Language and power



Effective rhetoric is about the **right words, at the right time and in the right place**. As we saw earlier with Burton's example about Hitler, the right words at the right time can shape world events. Language is a powerful tool; it can be used as a means of controlling or shaping the thoughts of others. Tongtao Zheng of the University of Tasmania writes: "Language is a weapon and a powerful tool in winning public support, especially during the current information revolution period...it is also a powerful weapon in the struggle of community against community, worldview against worldview." ("Characteristics of Australian Political Language Rhetoric (http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr4/zheng.htm)," *Intercultural Communication*, Issue 4, November 2000)

New Terminology

Dr Andrew Cline writes: "The power to define, and make it stick, is arguably the premier political power. To control the definitions of terms is to control the debate by bracketing how the audience may think about an issue. To create new terms is to create new realities." He demonstrates the power of creating new terminology with an example from April 12, 2002, when White House press secretary Ari Fleischer introduced the term 'homicide bombers' for the Palestinian men and women blowing themselves up in public places. He points out that this change in terms is not politically innocent: any terms created or redefined by a political administration have political importance:

Expand

Ambiguity in Diplomacy

A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has **more than one meaning**. (Kent Bach, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://userwww.sfsu.edu/%7Ekbach/ambguity.html) entry on Ambiguity)

...any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for **alternative reactions to the same piece of language**. (William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, London: Hogarth Press, 1927, quoted by Norman Scott, Ambiguity versus Precision: The Changing Role of Terminology in Conference Diplomacy (https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/ambiguity-versus-precision-changing-role-terminology-conference-diplomacy), *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

...ambiguities are pieces of language that 1. can be interpreted as meaning A, 2. can be interpreted as meaning B, and 3. cannot be interpreted as A and B simultaneously, but, eventually, as a neutral (re)source, from which, under specific focuses of vision/interpretation, both A and B might at separate times spring... In order to qualify as an ambiguity an expression must generate not only 'at least two different meanings', but also **two incompatible and unrelated meanings**. It is only then that an expression is truly ambiguous (Drazen Pehar, (https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/use-ambiguities-peace-agreements)Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements (http://diplo.diplomacy.edu/books/language_and_diplomacy/bookasp.asp?url=texts/excerpts/drazen2.htm), *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

...ambiguity is a one-many relation between syntax and sense. (Geoffrey Leech, *Semantics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987, quoted by Pehar).

Expand

Analogies: Effects and functions

An analogy is a systematic comparison between structures that uses properties of and relations between objects of a source structure to infer properties of and relations between objects of a target structure. (Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind (http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/%7Ephilos/MindDict/analogy.html))

1. Inference that if two or more things agree with one another in some respects they will prob. agree in others
2. Resemblance in some particulars between things otherwise unlike: similarity **b:** comparison based on such resemblance
3. Correspondence between the members of pairs or sets of linguistic forms that serves as a basis for the creation of another form
4. Correspondence in function between anatomical parts of different structure and origin (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online (http://www.m-w.com/home.htm))

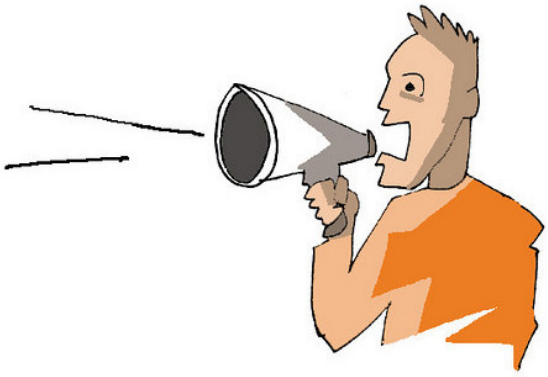
Analogy is a basic human reasoning process used in science, literature, art, education, and politics. Analogy can be used to make predictions, provide explanations, and restructure our knowledge. Analogy is also used to influence public opinion, fight battles, win wars, start and finish relationships, and advertise laundry detergent. (Kevin Dunbar (http://www.psych.mcgill.ca/perpg/fac/dunbar/analogy.html))

Expand

Diplomatic Signalling

Our day-to-day verbal communication includes a sub-text of signals: some verbal and others non-verbal, some deliberate and others unintended, some subtle and others obvious. Methods of signalling range from physical gestures and facial expressions to choices such the order in which topics in a conversation are raised, what other people are present to overhear a conversation, and the tone or volume of voice used when talking about a certain topic. Signalling may be used to reinforce a

message or to contradict it. For example, compare an invitation to dinner mentioned at the beginning of a conversation with a smile and a welcoming tone of voice with an invitation mentioned at the end of a conversation as an afterthought, in a hesitant tone. In the first case the signals reinforce the message, in the second, the listener may feel that her presence is not really desired.



Raymond Cohen writes “States have become adept at extra-linguistic forms of communication…[these] do not replace language, rather they complement, illuminate and supplement it.” (*Theatre of Power: The Art of Diplomatic Signalling*, London and New York: 1987) In diplomatic communication, as in communication between individuals, signals are frequently used to transmit messages. Actors of diplomacy often choose to use signals rather than direct communication for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is inappropriate for one actor to make too direct a suggestion or demand of another, or to transmit a message in person. A message passed through signals rather than directly also saves face for the receiving party, which can comply without seeming weak or refuse to comply without creating confrontation by simply ignoring the signals.

Expand

Trending



Humanising immigration: taking the discussion further (/blog/humanising-immigration-taking-discussion-further)

Biljana Scott 13 Mar 2019 Diplomacy (/blog/Diplomacy)

In this blog post, I want to respond to some of the questions that were raised during our recent WebDebate on humanising immigration (https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/webdebate-summary-humanising-immigration-0). This is crucial for keeping the discussion going and doing justice to all the valuable questions and comments we received.

0 comments (/blog/humanising-immigration-taking-discussion-further)



No true Scotsman (/blog/no-true-scotsman)

Biljana Scott 25 Jun 2018 Diplomacy (/blog/Diplomacy)

No true believer ever wavers! No true warrior dies in his bed! No true Norwegian takes sugar in coffee! No true American dishonours the stars and stripes! The No-true-Scotsman fallacy or 'move', as it is formally known, is an attempt to defend a generalisation against counter-examples by dismissing them as irrelevant.

0 comments (/blog/no-true-scotsman)



Intercultural communication and logical fallacies (/blog/intercultural-communication-and-logical-fallacies)

Biljana Scott 11 Jun 2018 Diplomacy (/blog/Diplomacy)

This blog is the first in a series in which I explore intercultural communication (ICC) through the lens of logical fallacies, linking each fallacy to a current trend or event. I have chosen fallacies in the first instance because, as their name suggests, fallacies are flawed. In so far as these errors in reasoning, and the unjustified conclusions they so often lead us to, tend to exacerbate intercultural misunderstanding, they need to be challenged. My second reason for choosing fallacies is that they have such force.

0 comments (/blog/intercultural-communication-and-logical-fallacies)

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Language
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Events

Intercultural communication essentials workshop (/calendar/intercultural-communication-essentials-workshop)

[WebDebate] Humanising immigration (/calendar/webdebate-humanising-immigration)

5 March 2019 | online

Language and
workshop for
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Books





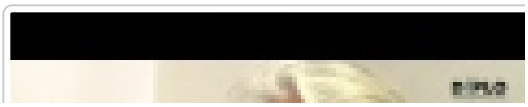


Resources

Why Persuasion? Reflections after 50 years of practising, teaching and studying diplomacy (/resources/general/why-persuasion-reflections-after-50-years-practising-teaching-and-studying)
Persuasion: importance of trust, relevance for small states, and limitations of computers (/resources/general/persuasion-importance-trust-relevance-small-states-and-limitations-computers)
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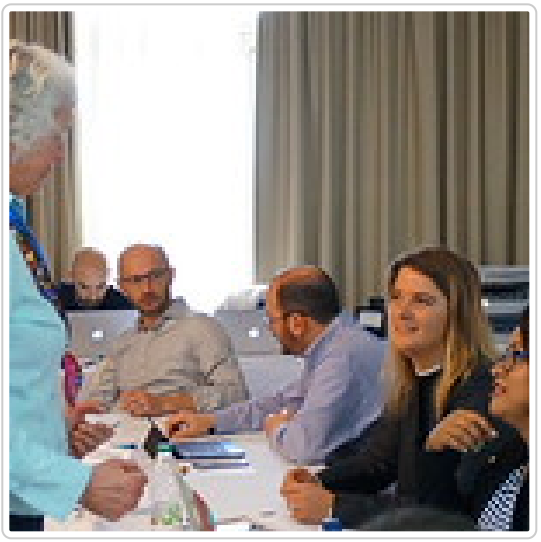
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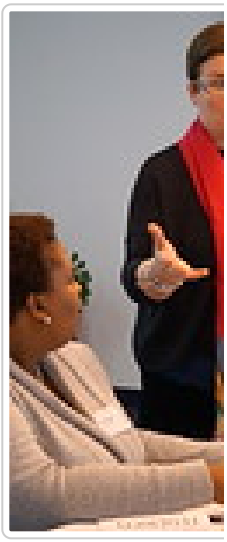
Photos



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https://diplo.smugmug.com/Events/2018/MABGD-s



Resource: Ambiguities, analogies, signalling

The collection of anecdotes below provide examples on (a) ambiguities, (b) anologies, and (c) diplomatic signalling in a range of texts.

A. Diplomatic ambiguities

1994 Cairo Conference on Population, clause on abortion

Louise Lassonde (*Coping with Population Challenges,* London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 1996, 7) provides the following example: 'In the Cairo Programme, various formulations which were contradictory a priori were worded in such a way as to satisfy all parties. This is what happened in the controversy over abortion, which was circumvented by means of a wording that satisfied all groups. It

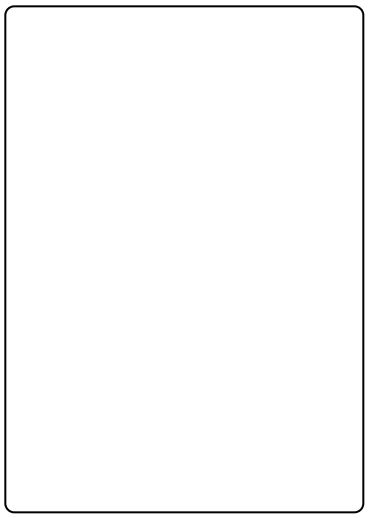
reads as follows:
"In those circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe".

In other words, safety (and therefore the possibility of an abortion) is not relevant where a government regards abortion as unthinkable. Safety is recommended, however, where abortion is not unthinkable. Consequently, since all positions on abortion are given equal weight, the wording agreed upon satisfies both those who wish abortion to be safe and those who do not want to acknowledge their legitimacy except in specific circumstances spelt out in their domestic legislation. Although these wordings are sometimes convoluted and disconcerting for those not participating in the negotiations, they are of vital importance. This is becase they express a concept which is particularly effective since it is deliberately charged with a multiplicity of meanings, and so makes it possible to break a deadlock in negotiations.'

Expand

Resource: Persuasion, the Essence of Diplomacy

The publication *Persuasion, the essence of diplomacy (https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/persuasion-essence-diplomacy),* which is also the title of a 2013 seminar held in Geneva (https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/persuasion-essence-diplomacy-press-release), was prepared in the honour of Prof. Dietrich Kappeler's 80th birthday, founder of DiploFoundation and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies.



Persuasion is one of the threads that connect ancient diplomats with twenty-first-century diplomacy in the digital age. Today, as ever, to persuade and/or be persuaded is one of the diplomat’s key concerns. Social media

tools such as Twitter and Facebook may have changed the playing field a little, but the essence of diplomacy remains the same.

Persuasion – language-mediated influence, a peaceful and sincere change of diplomatic view, and the congruence of attitudes – has been and will continue to be a valued skill, a characteristic that we share with the earliest diplomats, our predecessors.

This publication and a seminar address, among others, the following questions:

- Do you agree with Professor Kappeler's view that persuasion is the essence of diplomacy? Does this reflect your experience?
- Persuasion implies a change in the mental state of the persuaded side. Have you personally tried to change and succeeded in changing the ideas of your counterparts or diplomatic interlocutors in general?

Expand

What's next?

Diplo conducts many initiatives that address the impact of the Internet on diplomacy, including research, courses (online and in situ), policy discussions, and publications. We invite you to join us:

- **Learn** about the use of language in diplomacy and global governance through Diplo's courses on language and diplomacy (https://www.diplomacy.edu/courses/language), public diplomacy (https://www.diplomacy.edu/courses/public) and e-diplomacy (https://www.diplomacy.edu/courses/ediplomacy)
- **Visit** our portal on Intercultural communication (https://www.diplomacy.edu/topic/intercultural-communication)
- **Consult** books: Language and Diplomacy (http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/language-and-diplomacy),

Knowledge and Diplomacy (http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/knowledge-and-diplomacy), Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy (http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/intercultural-communication-and-diplomacy)

- **Join** the online discussions on contemporary diplomacy (http://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/Diplomacy) and e-diplomacy (http://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/E-Diplomacy); connect with bloggers and share your ideas and experiences
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