

English lessons for today's diplomats!

English is the business language of the world. You can thank the British Empire for that, not to mention today's internet. So it is vital for those in international business to be able to speak English. It doesn't matter whether it's British English, American English or Australian English, so long as it's English is all that matters. The English language is one of the preferred choices of the diplomatic community; French being the other. However, in today's world if you are a diplomat, or wish to be one, then knowledge of the English language is vital! Taking English lessons is an important way of learning the language.

In some countries it is compulsory for diplomats to know English in order to join their foreign service. Knowing the basics of the English language is therefore mandatory. Of course, it also comes down to that old phrase, "Practice makes perfect". In today's fast moving world diplomats have many new challenges. People working in the diplomatic service thus require special skills and, just like a doctor, who has to have a background in biology and other sciences, the diplomatic service requires a background in certain subjects. Certain skills also have to be attained. One of these is being proficient in the English language. Not everyone finds learning a language easy so there are different levels to attain. Diplomats, like all other students, can therefore brush up and revise their English language skills.

In India, the *Indian Times* recently reported that budding diplomats enter their profession after taking exams in regional languages, for example in Hindi. Because of the new trend in India to speak local languages rather than English, special arrangements have been introduced to probationers who were weak in English. They have thus received special language training in English. Surprisingly in India there is a shortage of well-trained officers. Only a quarter or so of candidates make it through to the Indian civil service, simply because the others don't have English language skills.

Category: Diplomatic English / Diplomats / Learning English
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

Senior Indian foreign service officials are not happy about this trend. One said, "Imagine getting recruits who cannot even speak English!" The person added, "Increasing democratisation that brings in people of all kinds of backgrounds into the service is not a bad thing per se, but not by compromising quality. Knowing English is basic even if you have to function within the country, let alone abroad."

Meanwhile the *Hindustan Times* reported a while back that a group of budding candidates who wished to enter the diplomatic service took their exams in Hindi. With English not being their strong point the young Indian Foreign Service (IFS) probationers were sent to the Foreign Service Institute in Delhi. Of the batch of 19, at least six were weak in English. "It is not up to the desired standard," said the Institute's Ajai Chaudhary. "For the External Affairs Ministry, English is the language through which we communicate to the outside world; the medium through which we conduct our foreign policy," added Chaudhary, who grooms candidates.

Mr Chaudhary said his institute was tipped off by the Mussoorie Academy that some fresh recruits lacked proficiency in the language. "We had been forewarned," he said. The institute has since introduced regular classes for these probationers, who are now being taught how to 'speak' and 'write' in English fluently. Because this was the first time English was taught to probationers the institute had to find an English teacher. Initially, a retired professor from the English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad was hired part-time before they decided to hire a full-time English teacher.

So budding diplomats, at the end of the day if you want to be a successful career diplomat who has to deal with tricky situations you'll need 'the gift of the gab' in English!

EXERCISES

1. **Diplomatic English:** What is diplomatic English? What is a diplomat? What have the two got in common? Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Geography: India:** Where is India? What countries surround it? What is its capital? What seas surround it? Draw a map on the board then look on Google maps.

3. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page two - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

4. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. **Vocabulary:** Students now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. **The article:** Students look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. **Let's think!** Think of five ways of how to learn English. Then add five things a diplomat does. Write them below. How can a diplomat improve their English using your suggestions? Do you think it's difficult being a diplomat?

Five ways to learn English	Five things a diplomat does
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Let's think!** Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with '**Diplomatic Service**' as you can. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

9. **Let's chat:** In pairs. You are diplomats having tea at three in an embassy. Discuss the world today. Think of some diplomatic or top news stories! The *waiter/waitress* is serving the tea. *5 minutes*.

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10. A day in an Indian Embassy! *In pairs / groups.* Each person chooses to be one of the below. Create a short story about what that person might do or see during a typical diplomatic day in an Indian Embassy. Include diplomatic challenges, who you met, the purpose of any meetings etc.... Student's stories can be interacted!

1 Junior diplomat in Embassy	3 Ambassador in Embassy
2 Visiting diplomat/Ambassador	4 Doorman/Maid in Embassy

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

11. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the country in the article.
- 2) Name the cities in the article.
- 3) What does 'gift of the gab' mean?
- 4) What other language is mentioned?
- 5) What is that old phrase?

Student B

- 1) What do we mean by tricky situations?
- 2) Who had been forewarned?
- 3) Name the newspapers.
- 4) Who grooms who and what does groom mean?
- 5) Who is not happy about who and why?

12. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Diplomats _____
- b) English lessons _____
- c) Diplomatic English _____
- d) To be a diplomat _____

13. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two-minute presentation on: **Being a diplomat.** Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the strong and weak points on each presentation.

14. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Being a diplomat.** Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. Quick-fire session: In a group in a circle. The teacher asks the class, **"I would like to be a diplomat because..."**

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Do you think English language lessons are important for diplomats? If yes, why?
- 3) Why is French not more important than English?
- 4) Surely French is the main diplomatic language, isn't it?
- 5) What do French people think of English as being the more important diplomatic language?
- 6) Do you speak French?
- 7) Would you consider learning French rather than English? Why? Why not?
- 8) Give three advantages of speaking English?
- 9) Has India taken a backward step in introducing regional languages as the first spoken language rather than the country as a whole speaking English as the first spoken language, which it used to?
- 10) Is the justification in speaking regional languages in India now proving to be the wrong decision – the results of young budding diplomats failing the diplomatic tests is surely a sign of the times is it not?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) Would you like to be a diplomat?
- 3) Do you think it is difficult to be a diplomat?
- 4) What advice would you give people wanting to be a diplomat?
- 5) What are the advantages of being a diplomat?
- 6) What are the disadvantages of being a diplomat?
- 7) How important is English in your job?
- 8) How often do you speak English?
- 9) How often do you practise speaking English?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's brainstorm! Teaching budding Indian diplomats English

Allow 10-15 minutes - Small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You have been assigned the task of improving the standard of English of budding Indian diplomats wanting to work in the Indian diplomatic service. Brainstorm some ideas about how you will help them. Choose a spokesperson who can present your ideas to the class at the end of your preparation. Present it visually or use the board etc... Try to be imaginative!

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Three objectives!2) Choose a country they could study an intensive English course in. Why here?3) What three challenges might you face in your quest to help them?4) What help might you offer? (Three ideas)5) How can a computer assist them? Give three online examples.6) Three other ways of learning English. |
|---|

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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In some countries it is (3)_____ for diplomats to know English in order to join their foreign service. Knowing the (4)_____ of the English language is therefore (5)_____. Of course, it also comes down to that old phrase, "(6)_____ makes perfect". In today's fast moving world (7)_____ have many new (8)_____. People working in the diplomatic service thus require special skills and, just like a doctor, who has to have a background in biology and other sciences, the diplomatic service requires a background in certain subjects.

Certain skills also have to be attained. One of these is being (1)_____ in the English language. Not everyone finds learning a language easy so there are different levels to (2)_____. Diplomats, like all other students, can therefore brush up and revise their English language skills.

In India, the *Indian Times* recently reported that (3)_____ diplomats enter their (4)_____ after taking (5)_____ in regional languages, for example in Hindi. Because of the new trend in India to speak local languages rather than English, special arrangements have been introduced to (6)_____ who were weak in English. They have thus received special language (7)_____ in English. (8)_____ in India there is a shortage of well-trained officers. Only a quarter or so of candidates make it through to the Indian civil service, simply because the others don't have English language skills.

vital

mandatory

compulsory

diplomats

practice

challenges

basics

diplomatic

attain

probationers

budding

exams

surprisingly

proficient

training

profession

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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Certain skills also have to be attained. One of these is being proficient in (1)___ English language. Not everyone finds learning a language easy (2)___ there are different levels to attain. Diplomats, like all other students, (3)___ therefore brush up (4)___ revise their English language skills.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:
Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

1	forewarned	11	initially
2	community	12	fluently
3	mandatory	13	groom
4	tricky	14	democratisation
5	compulsory	15	backgrounds
6	challenges	16	candidates
7	budding	17	compromising
8	profession	18	probationers
9	proficient	19	communicate
10	tongue	20	diplomats

LINKS

<http://www.efluniversity.ac.in/>

<http://maps.google.com/>

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/>

<http://www.indiantimes.net/>

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