



Diplomatic Language for Bureaucrats

C1-C2 Lesson Plan

1.2. Reading Comprehension

1.2.1. Pre-Reading Discussion

Discuss the questions in pairs or small groups

- In your experience, what are the key characteristics of effective diplomatic communication? How does it differ from everyday conversation?
- Can you think of a recent example from Polish or international politics where the choice of words had a significant impact on a diplomatic outcome?
- What challenges do you face when communicating in English in a professional or bureaucratic setting? Are there specific moments when you struggle to achieve the desired nuance or formality?
- How important is cultural context in diplomatic language? Provide an example where misunderstanding cultural nuances led to a communication breakdown.



Article:

Poland's Foreign and Security Policy: Main Directions

Author: Dr Agnieszka Bieńczyk-Missala (University of Warsaw, Institute of International Relations)

Introduction

Poland's geopolitical location at the heart of Europe has always shaped its strategic outlook. Since regaining independence in 1989 and, subsequently, acceding to NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004), the country has consistently regarded membership in these two organisations as the strongest determinant of its position in international relations. This article analyses the principal directions of Polish foreign and security policy, with particular emphasis on energy solidarity, eastern policy, and transatlantic commitments.

1. NATO and Collective Defence

From the outset, Poland has championed an "open-door" policy within NATO. Warsaw argues that further enlargement stabilises the Euro-Atlantic area and diminishes historical spheres-of-influence logic. Poland hosts multinational NATO battlegroups on its territory, meets the 2 % GDP defence-spending target, and actively supports the Alliance's adaptation in cyber and hybrid-warfare domains.

2. The European Union: Energy and Security

Energy security is Poland's top EU priority. Warsaw has long warned that over-reliance on Russian natural gas—especially the Yamal and Nord Stream pipelines—creates leverage for political pressure. After the 2006 and 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas crises, Poland tabled proposals for an "energy union" that would include:

- joint purchasing mechanisms to reduce price differentials;
- diversification of supply sources (LNG terminals, Baltic Pipe, Central-Southern Gas Corridor);
- common infrastructure standards and reverse-flow capabilities.

Although initial resistance came from some western member states, the 2014 Ukraine conflict accelerated political consensus on EU energy solidarity.

3. Eastern Policy: Eastern Partnership & European Endowment for Democracy

Poland co-initiated the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 with Sweden. The EaP aims to deepen political association and economic integration with six post-Soviet states (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus). Warsaw views the programme as a stabilising instrument that projects European norms eastward without offering immediate membership prospects.

Complementing the EaP, Poland launched the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in 2013—a flexible EU-funded instrument that supports civil-society organisations, independent media, and political movements in the EU’s eastern and southern neighbourhoods. The EED is headquartered in Brussels but operates with significant Polish managerial input.

4. Bilateral Relations with Key Partners

United States: The strategic partnership remains central. A rotating U.S. armoured brigade combat team is stationed in Poland under the European Deterrence Initiative. Polish governments of every political persuasion have lobbied Washington for an increased military footprint and for visa-waiver liberalisation.

Germany & France: Poland seeks pragmatic cooperation within the Weimar Triangle, yet differences persist over energy projects (e.g., Nord Stream 2) and rule-of-law discussions. Warsaw argues that any EU energy project must fully respect the Energy Union’s diversification objectives.

Regional Formats: Poland actively participates in the Bucharest Nine (B9) and the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), the latter focusing on north-south infrastructure and energy interconnectivity between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas.

5. Contemporary Challenges

Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine vindicated many of Poland’s long-standing threat assessments. Warsaw has:

- delivered significant military and humanitarian aid to Kyiv;
- advocated the toughest EU sanctions regime to date;
- proposed a new EU financing facility for Ukrainian reconstruction modelled on the post-World War II Marshall Plan.

Poland also warns that hybrid threats—disinformation, cyber-attacks, and migration instrumentalisation—require coordinated EU-NATO responses.

Conclusion

Poland’s foreign and security policy continues to be anchored in NATO and EU membership while remaining alert to energy vulnerabilities and eastern instability. By leveraging its position as a frontline state, Warsaw seeks to shape European policies toward greater resilience, energy diversification, and democratic outreach to the east.



1.2.3. Comprehension Exercises

1.2.3.1. Multiple-Choice Questions

Instructions: Read the article "Poland's Foreign and Security Policy: Main Directions" carefully. For each question, choose the best answer from the options provided.

1. What was a primary motivation for Poland's strong advocacy for energy solidarity within the EU?

- a) To reduce its own energy consumption and promote green technologies.
- b) To counterbalance the influence of Germany and France in EU energy policy.
- c) To mitigate its heavy reliance on Russian natural gas and prevent potential political blackmail.
- d) To secure funding for the development of its domestic energy infrastructure.

2. Which of the following best describes the purpose of the European Endowment for Democracy, a project initiated by Poland?

- a) To provide financial aid to EU member states facing economic crises.
- b) To support democratic movements and organizations in the EU's eastern and southern neighboring countries.
- c) To promote cultural exchange and educational programs between EU and non-EU countries.
- d) To fund research and development in the field of renewable energy.

3. According to the article, how did Poland utilize the Eastern Partnership initiative?

- a) Primarily as a tool to strengthen its economic ties with Russia.
- b) As a means to develop diplomatic cooperation with countries like Sweden and Germany.
- c) To establish a military alliance against potential threats from the east.
- d) To create a new bureaucratic structure within the EU to handle eastern affairs.

4. What was Poland's stance on the development of a common EU energy policy, as described in the article?

- a) It opposed the idea, preferring to maintain national control over energy resources.
- b) It was indifferent, as its energy needs were already met through bilateral agreements.
- c) It supported the development of a common policy to enhance energy security for all member states.
- d) It advocated for a policy that would prioritize the interests of Eastern European countries exclusively.

5. What significant event in 2014 heightened the urgency of Poland's efforts to develop an energy union?

- a) The signing of a new trade agreement between the EU and Ukraine.
- b) The discovery of new natural gas reserves in the North Sea.
- c) The outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine.
- d) The election of a new Polish government with a strong pro-EU agenda.

1.2.3.2. True/False/Not Given Statements

Instructions: Based on the information in the article, decide if each statement is True, False, or Not Given.

1. Poland was the sole initiator of the Eastern Partnership, without any support from other EU countries.
2. The article states that Poland and Ukraine paid the highest prices for Russian natural gas in Europe.
3. The European Endowment for Democracy was designed to support democratic movements within the European Union.
4. The article explicitly mentions that Poland successfully blocked the construction of the North European pipeline.
5. Poland's foreign policy has consistently prioritized security issues due to its geopolitical location and history.



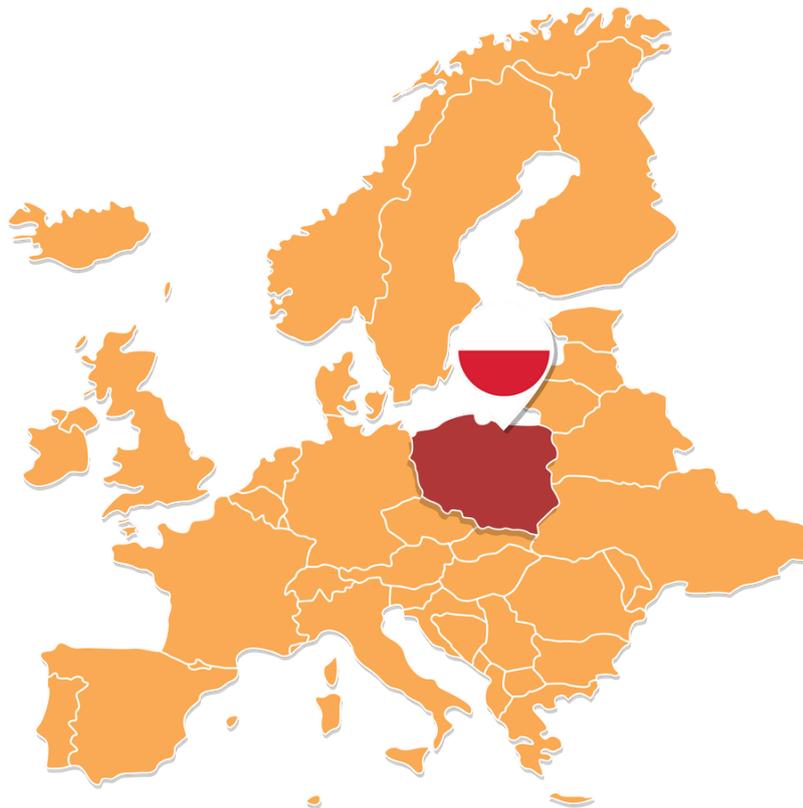
FALSE

TRUE

1.2.3.3. Summary Completion

Instructions: Complete the summary of the article by filling in the blanks with words or phrases from the text.

Poland's foreign policy is heavily influenced by its geopolitical location and historical context, leading to a strong focus on (1) ----- . Within the European Union, Poland has actively sought to shape policy in areas critical to its national interests, particularly (2) ----- . A key concern for Poland has been its significant dependence on (3) ----- , which has driven its efforts to promote a common EU energy policy and diversify supply sources. To this end, Poland has been a vocal proponent of an (4) ----- , proposing measures such as joint gas purchases and enhanced infrastructure. Beyond energy, Poland has demonstrated its diplomatic initiative through projects like the (5) ----- , aimed at fostering closer ties with the EU's eastern neighbors, and the (6) ----- , which supports pro-democracy actors in the region. These initiatives highlight Poland's commitment to playing an active and influential role in shaping the EU's external relations and promoting stability in its neighborhood.



SECTION 2 – LISTENING

Video: TEDx excerpt “Diplomat’s Transformations in a Changing World” (Dr. Michal Mlynar,

Introduction: Here’s a concise warm-up summary you can use before watching the video, In this TEDxWaterStreet talk (May 2022), H.E. Dr. Michal Mlynar – a seasoned diplomat – shares insights on how diplomacy is evolving in today’s fast-changing, interconnected world. Drawing on his United Nations experience, he explores how personal and professional transformations can be used to address global challenges, build consensus across cultures, and seize new opportunities. The segment offers clear, engaging examples and rich diplomatic language, making it both inspiring and practical for anyone interested in international relations.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6fmVB39qKO>

2.1 Pre-Listening (2–3 min)

Look at the video title and freeze-frame. Predict:

- What key themes will Dr. Mlynar discuss?
 - Which diplomatic terms do you expect to hear?
- Jot two predictions to compare after watching.



1.3.3. Listening Exercises

1.3.3.1. Multiple-Choice Questions

Instructions: Listen to the video and choose the best answer for each question.

1. According to Dr. Mlynar, what is the biggest challenge facing diplomacy today?

- a) The rise of nationalism and populism.
- b) The increasing complexity of global problems.
- c) The lack of funding for diplomatic missions.
- d) The decline of the nation-state.

2. What does Dr. Mlynar mean by "bridge-building diplomacy"?

- a) A type of diplomacy that focuses on building physical infrastructure.
- b) A type of diplomacy that is based on the principles of realpolitik.
- c) A type of diplomacy that seeks to connect different cultures and perspectives.
- d) A type of diplomacy that is used to resolve trade disputes.

3. What example does Dr. Mlynar use to illustrate the power of diplomacy?

- a) The Paris Agreement on climate change.
- b) The Iran nuclear deal.
- c) The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland.
- d) The Camp David Accords.

4. What does Dr. Mlynar believe is the key to successful diplomacy?

- a) The ability to use force and coercion.
- b) The ability to build trust and find common ground.
- c) The ability to speak multiple languages.
- d) The ability to understand international law.

5. What is Dr. Mlynar's main message to the audience?

- a) That diplomacy is a dying art that is no longer relevant in the 21st century.
- b) That diplomacy is a powerful tool that can be used to create a better world.
- c) That diplomacy is a complex and difficult profession that is not for everyone.
- d) That diplomacy is a game of power and influence that is best left to the experts

1.3.3.2. Note-Taking and Chart Completion

Instructions: While listening to the video, take notes on the main points of Dr. Mlynar's talk. Then, complete the following chart by filling in the blanks with the appropriate information.

Challenge	Dr. Mlynar's Proposed Solution	Example
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3

1.3.3.3. Sentence Completion

Instructions: Complete the following sentences with a word or phrase from the video. The sentences are direct quotes from Dr. Mlynar's talk.

1. "Diplomacy is not just about negotiating treaties and attending state dinners. It is about _____."
2. "In a world that is increasingly divided, we need a new kind of diplomacy, a diplomacy that is based on _____."
3. "The power of diplomacy lies in its ability to _____."
4. "We need to move beyond the traditional model of diplomacy, which is often seen as elitist and exclusive, and create a more _____."
5. "The future of our world depends on our ability to _____."



1.4. Critical Thinking Task

1.4.1. Case Study Analysis: Diplomatic Statement

Case Study:

In a recent press conference, a Polish government official was asked to comment on a new law passed by a neighboring country that has been criticized by human rights organizations. The official responded:

"We have taken note of the legislative changes in our neighboring country. We are in the process of analyzing the details of the new law and its potential implications. Poland values its strong bilateral relations and open channels of communication with all its neighbors. We believe that a constructive dialogue is the best way to address any concerns and to ensure that the fundamental values we share as Europeans are upheld. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and will not hesitate to raise our concerns through the appropriate diplomatic channels."

Task:

Analyze the official's statement. What is the explicit message, and what are the implicit messages? How does the language used reflect the principles of diplomatic communication? Identify specific words or phrases that are used to convey a particular tone or stance.



1.4.2. Evaluation of Language Strategies

Task:

Based on the case study and the materials covered in this lesson, evaluate the effectiveness of the following diplomatic language strategies. For each strategy, provide an example and discuss its potential advantages and disadvantages.

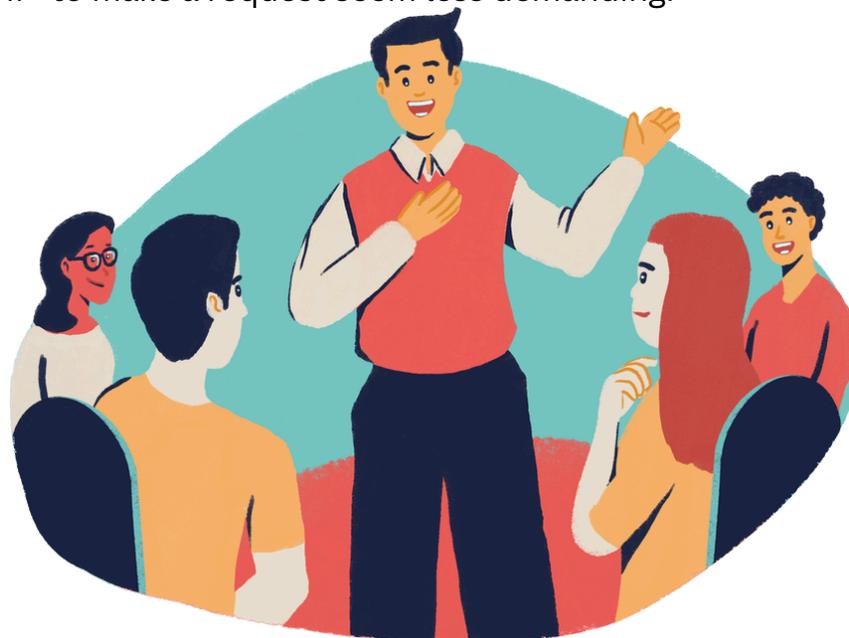
Using Euphemisms: Replacing a harsh or direct term with a milder or more indirect one (e.g., saying "a frank exchange of views" instead of "a heated argument").

Employing the Passive Voice: Shifting the focus away from the agent of an action (e.g., "Mistakes were made" instead of "We made mistakes").

Expressing Concern: Using phrases like "we are concerned" or "we are monitoring the situation" to signal disapproval without making an outright accusation.

Highlighting Shared Values: Emphasizing common ground and mutual interests to build rapport and encourage cooperation.

Using Conditional Language: Employing phrases like "we would appreciate it if" or "it would be helpful if" to make a request seem less demanding.



1.5. Vocabulary Expansion

1.5.1. Key Diplomatic Terms and Phrases

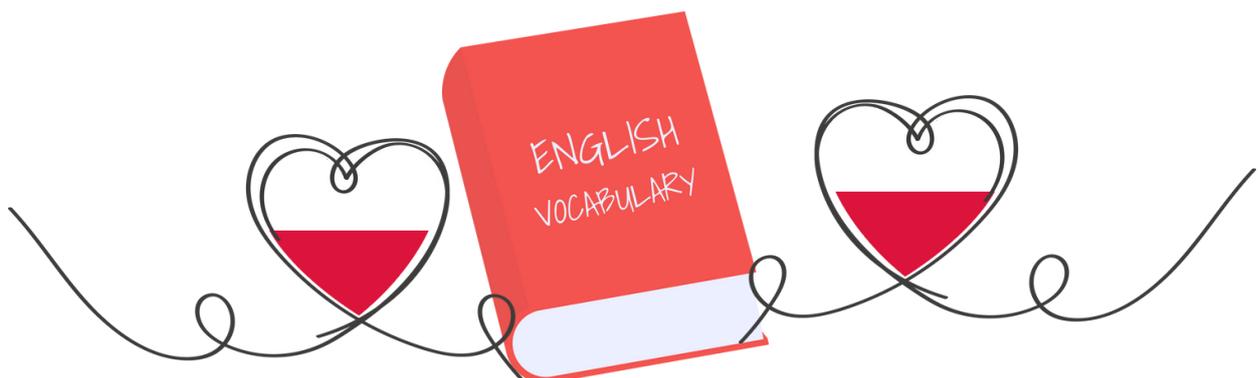
Instructions: Match the diplomatic term on the left with its correct definition on the right.

Term/Phrase	Term/Phrase
1. to take note of	a) A discussion intended to be helpful and lead to a positive outcome.
2. to express concern	b) To formally bring up an issue that is causing worry.
3. a frank exchange of views	c) The relationship between two countries.
4. to uphold (values/principles)	d) To watch a situation closely to see how it develops.
5. bilateral relations	e) To acknowledge or be aware of something.
6. constructive dialogue	f) To reduce the intensity of a conflict.
7. through diplomatic channels	g) A diplomatic way of describing a discussion with significant disagreements.
8. to monitor the situation	h) To maintain or defend a set of beliefs or standards.
9. to raise concerns	i) Using the official communication networks between governments.
10. to de-escalate (a conflict)	j) A formal way of indicating disapproval or worry

1.5.3. Sentence Completion with New Vocabulary

Instructions: Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the words from the vocabulary list.

1. The two countries have a long history of friendly _____, which they hope to continue.
2. The ambassador was instructed to _____ the government's _____ about the new security law.
3. After a _____, the two sides agreed to a temporary ceasefire.
4. The international community has a responsibility to _____ the principles of the UN Charter.
5. The foreign ministry issued a statement saying it was "closely _____" the developments in the region.
6. The dispute was resolved through quiet, _____, rather than public confrontation.
7. The official statement from the ministry was carefully worded to _____ of the situation without directly criticizing the other party.
8. The negotiators worked through the night to find a way to _____ the crisis.
9. The minister's visit is seen as an important step in improving _____ between the two countries.
10. The government has promised to _____ any issues that may arise during the transition period.



Focus: Advanced Reported Speech and Passive Voice

In diplomatic language, the use of reported speech and the passive voice is common for several reasons. Reported speech allows diplomats to convey the words of others without taking direct responsibility for them, while the passive voice can be used to shift focus away from agent of an action, making a statement seem objective or less accusatory.

REPORTED SPEECH



I am committed to this policy

He said that he **was** committed to this policy.



PASSIVE VOICE



The treaty **was signed** by both parties.

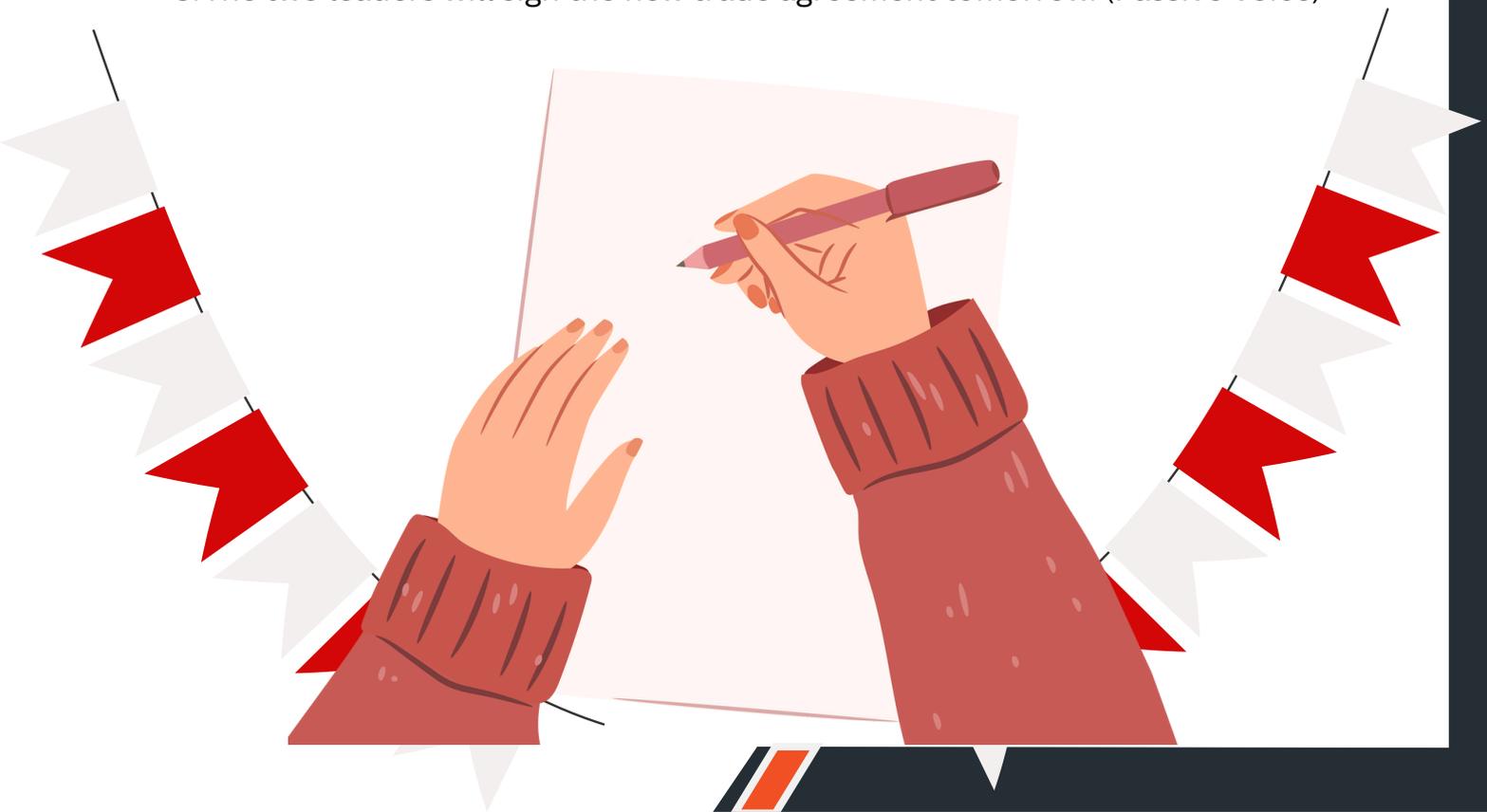
This construction is often used when the agent is unknown, unimportant, or better left unstated.



1.6.2. Sentence Rewriting Task

Instructions: Rewrite the following sentences using the grammatical structure indicated in brackets.

1. "We will not tolerate any violation of our sovereignty," the minister declared.
(Reported Speech)
2. The government has imposed new sanctions on the country. (Passive Voice)
3. "We are reviewing our policy on this matter," the spokesperson said. (Reported Speech)
4. The opposition party has criticized the government's handling of the crisis.
(Passive Voice)
5. "We hope to reach an agreement by the end of the week," the negotiator stated.
(Reported Speech)
6. The international community has condemned the recent acts of aggression.
(Passive Voice)
7. "We have received assurances from the other side," the diplomat reported.
(Reported Speech)
8. The two leaders will sign the new trade agreement tomorrow. (Passive Voice)



1.6.3. Error Correction

Instructions: The following sentences contain errors in the use of reported speech or the passive voice. Identify and correct the errors.

1. The minister said that he is committed to finding a peaceful solution.
2. The new policy was announce by the government yesterday.
3. The ambassador reported that the situation is under control.
4. The treaty has been sign by all member states.
5. The spokesperson said that they are considering all options.
6. The proposal was reject by the committee.
7. The president stated that he will not back down from his position.
8. The report was write by a team of independent experts.



1.7. Discussion Section

1.7.1. Debate: Ethical Use of Diplomatic Language

Motion: "The use of diplomatic language, with its emphasis on ambiguity and indirectness, is essential for maintaining international peace and stability, even if it can sometimes obscure the truth."

Task: Prepare arguments for or against this motion. Consider the following points:

- The need for tact and discretion in sensitive negotiations.
- The public's right to transparency and accountability.
- The potential for diplomatic language to be used to justify inaction or to cover up wrongdoing.
- The role of the media in interpreting and clarifying diplomatic statements.



1.7.2. Opinion-Sharing on Polish Foreign Policy

Task: Based on the article "Poland's Foreign and Security Policy: Main Directions," share your opinion on the following questions:

1. Do you think Poland's focus on energy security and its efforts to reduce dependence on Russian gas are justified? Why or why not?
2. How effective do you believe Poland's initiatives, such as the Eastern Partnership and the European Endowment for Democracy, have been in promoting stability and democracy in the region?
3. What are the potential risks and benefits of Poland's proactive and sometimes assertive foreign policy within the EU?
4. How do you see Poland's role in the EU evolving in the coming years, particularly in light of ongoing geopolitical challenges?



1.7.3. Hypothetical Diplomatic Scenarios

Task: Work with your partner to develop a diplomatic response to the following hypothetical scenarios. Use the vocabulary and grammatical structures you have learned in this lesson.

Scenario 1: You are a Polish diplomat. Your country is concerned about a new pipeline project that would increase the EU's dependence on Russian gas, bypassing your territory. You need to express your concerns to a German diplomat in a firm but diplomatic manner.

Scenario 2: You are an EU official. You are mediating a dispute between two member states over a trade issue. One country has imposed unilateral measures that the other country considers to be in violation of EU law. You need to propose a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

Scenario 3: You are a spokesperson for the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You are giving a press conference to announce a new initiative aimed at supporting democratic reforms in a neighboring country. You need to present the initiative in a positive light while also addressing potential concerns about interference in the country's internal affairs.



The
End!