



Languages and Culture in History

LANGUAGES OF DIPLOMACY IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

EUROPE AND THE USA

Edited by
Gleb Kazakov and Vladislav Rjéoutski



“In this wide-ranging and path-breaking volume, the 13 contributors clearly demonstrate how much historians can learn by paying close attention to the role of languages in international understandings – not to mention misunderstandings”.

Peter Burke, *University of Cambridge*



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Languages of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World

This book outlines major trends in language use by early modern diplomats, mainly in the European context, through a series of case studies and overviews of regional diplomatic traditions.

During the early modern period, linguistic practices in European diplomacy changed drastically, as the decline of Latin and German as diplomatic languages paved the way for the rise of French as a pan-European medium of diplomacy. While it was no secret that French was the dominant language of European elites during the eighteenth century, surprisingly little is known about the way this cultural trend translated into a major linguistic shift in diplomacy. This volume offers a broader perspective, tracking these changes throughout the early modern period. Spanning three centuries and extending across and beyond continental Europe, the contributors map the pace, the mechanisms, the reasons, and the limits for changes in the use of languages in early modern diplomacy and explore the linguistic practices of diplomats as an indicator of wider social, cultural, and political changes.

A novel study of European diplomacy and linguistic interactions, this book will be of interest to historians, in particular those working on language practices in diplomacy and the social history of languages.

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Gleb Kazakov is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Eastern European History, Historical Institute, Justus Liebig University of Gießen, Germany. He is the author of *Die Moskauer Strelitzen-Revolt 1682: diplomatische Spionage, Nachrichtenverkehr und Narrativentransfer zwischen Russland und Europa* (2021) (*The Moscow streltsy revolt of 1682: Diplomatic espionage, circulation of news and transfer of narratives between Russia and Europe*).

Vladislav Rjéoutski is Gerda Henkel Fellow at the German Historical Institute in Paris, France, he served as principal investigator of the DFG-funded research project on the languages of diplomacy in eighteenth-century Russia. He is co-author (with Derek Offord and Gesine Argent) of *The French Language in Russia: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History* (2018) and co-editor (with Guido Braun, Indravati Félicité, and Sophie Holm) of *Translation in Early Modern Diplomacy* (2026).

Languages and Culture in History

The series Languages and Culture in History studies the role foreign languages have played in the creation of linguistic and cultural heritage, at the individual, communal, national and transnational level.

At the heart of this series is the historical evolution of linguistic and cultural policies, internal as well as external, and their relationship with linguistic and cultural identities.

The series takes an interdisciplinary approach to a variety of historical issues: the diffusion, the supply and the demand for foreign languages, the history of pedagogical practices, the historical relationship between languages in each cultural context, the public and private use of foreign languages – in short, every way foreign languages intersect with local languages in the cultural realm.

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Europe and the USA

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Vladislav Rjéoutski**



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About the Authors

Guido Braun has been Professor of Early Modern History at the Université de Haute-Alsace (UHA, Mulhouse) since 2018, and, since 2021, Director of the *Centre des recherches sur les économies, les sociétés, les arts et les techniques* (CRÉSAT) as well as editorial director of *Revue du Rhin supérieur*. He was previously Head of the Department of History (2019–2021) and a member of the German Historical Institutes in Rome (2001–2004, 2014–2015) and Paris (2004–2007). His research focuses on the history of international relations in the early modern era (war, peace, diplomacy), the history of cultural transfers and the circulation of knowledge (interculturality, communication, exchanges), and the history of France, the Holy Roman Empire, and Italy (institutions, cultural spaces, political models). His publications as editor include *Diplomatische Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit. Erfahrungsräume und Orte der Wissensproduktion* (Berlin & Boston, 2018); *Spies, Espionage, and Secret Diplomacy in the Early Modern Period* (Stuttgart, 2021); and *Languages and Diplomacy, 15th to 21st centuries* (Stuttgart, 2025).

Irena Fliter is the author of *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia: From Delegates to Diplomats*, a comprehensive exploration of Ottoman delegates' experiences in Prussia (Liverpool, 2023). Her current research project focuses on the Ottoman Jewish family Camondo, examining their migration and identity practices across the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Sophie Holm studied history at the University of Helsinki, where she received her doctorate with a dissertation on diplomatic practices amongst foreign envoys in eighteenth-century Stockholm. Her research focuses on the cultural history of diplomacy, with a special focus on translation and media history. From 2022 to 2026, she was a research fellow within a research project (funded by the German Research Foundation) on the languages of eighteenth-century Russian diplomacy in a European context at the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe. She has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Finnish Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies since 2012 and a member of the Executive Committee of the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies since 2017.

Christopher Joby studied Oriental Languages at Oxford University, Classics and Theology at Durham University, and in 2006 received his doctorate at Durham on art in the Dutch Reformed Church. In 2020, he defended his habilitation thesis in linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. He has taught Dutch language, history, and culture at universities in the UK, South Korea, Poland, and Taiwan. Between 2020 and 2023, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, Taipei. He is currently a Research Associate, Centre of Taiwan Studies, SOAS, University of London, and an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History and Art History, University of East Anglia. His books include *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687)* (Amsterdam, 2014); *The Dutch Language in Japan (1600–1900)* (Leiden, 2020), and *Christian Mission in Seventeenth-Century Taiwan* (Leiden, 2025). His next monograph, *Multilingualism in the Early-Modern City: Language and Society in Norwich (1500–1750)*, will be published by Liverpool University Press in 2026.

Gleb Kazakov studied history and Scandinavian studies in Moscow and Göttingen (2004–2010) and received his doctorate at the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg in 2019 with a thesis on European diplomatic and media perception of the Moscow strel'tsy uprising of 1682. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher and teaching assistant at the Chair of Eastern European History at the Justus Liebig University of Gießen. He is the author of *Die Moskauer Strelitzen-Revolte 1682: diplomatische Spionage, Nachrichtenverkehr und Narrativentransfer zwischen Russland und Europa (The Moscow streltsy revolt of 1682: Diplomatic espionage, circulation of news and transfer of narratives between Russia and Europe)* (Stuttgart, 2021) and co-editor, with Aleksandr Lavrov, of *Doneseniia shvedskikh agentov o Khovanshchine 1682–1683 gg. (Reports of Swedish diplomats about the revolt of the streltsy, 1682–1683)* (St. Petersburg, 2022).

Beáta Megyesi pursued her studies in general and computational linguistics at Stockholm University, Sweden (1995–1999). She completed her doctorate at the Royal Institute of Technology in 2002. In 2003, she moved to Uppsala University, where she became a Professor in 2021. Since 2023, Beáta Megyesi is Professor of computational linguistics at Stockholm University. She is the former president of the Northern European Association for Language Technology, head of the Department of Linguistics and Philology and campus director at Uppsala University. Presently, Beáta Megyesi is actively involved as the Principal Investigator of the DECRYPT project, dedicated to the development of infrastructural resources and tools for historical cryptology.

Maria A. Petrova studied history at the State Academic University for the Humanities (Moscow) and received her doctorate in 2008 at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow) with a thesis that was later published as a book: *Ekaterina II i Iosif II: formirovanie rossiisko-avstriiskogo soiuza. 1780–1790 (Catherine II and Joseph II: the formation of*

the Russian-Austrian alliance. 1780–1790) (Moscow, 2011). She is currently a senior research fellow at the Institute of World History RAS and the National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow). She explores the history of early modern Russian diplomacy and the relations between Russia and the Holy Roman Empire in the eighteenth century.

Nina Pösch studied history and philosophy at the University of Bonn (2012–2018). Since 2019, she has been a PhD student at the University of Upper Alsace and the University of Augsburg.

Vladislav Rjéoutski is a Gerda Henkel fellow at the German Historical Institute in Paris where he was previously a research fellow (2022–2025); earlier, he held the same position at the German Historical Institute in Moscow (2013–2022) and at the University of Bristol (2011–2013). His research interests include the history of education, translation, and the cultural and social history of languages. He co-authored (with Derek Offord and Gesine Argent) *The French Language in Russia: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History* (Amsterdam, 2018; Russian edition, Moscow, 2021). He edited or co-edited several collective volumes, among them: (with Anne Mézin) *Les Français en Russie au siècle des Lumières* (*The French in Russia during the age of Enlightenment*) (2 vols., Ferney-Voltaire, 2011); (with Derek Offord, Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, and Gesine Argent) *French and Russian in Imperial Russia* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 2015); (with Sergey Polskoy) *Laboratoriia poniatii. Perevod i iazyki politiki v Rossii XVIII veka* (*Laboratory of concepts. Translation and the languages of politics in Russia in the eighteenth century*) (Moscow, 2022); (with Guido Braun, Indravati Félicité, and Sophie Holm) *Translation in Early Modern Diplomacy* (New York and London, 2026). In 2022–2025, he served as the principal investigator in the DFG-funded research project on the languages in eighteenth-century Russian diplomacy.

Jonathan Singerton is an Assistant Professor of Global Political History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research focuses on the global history of the Habsburg lands in Central Europe from the early modern period to the early twentieth century. In addition, he has a keen interest in North American, oceanic, and colonial histories. Prior to joining VU Amsterdam, he was a lecturer at the University of Amsterdam and previously at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, as well as a Researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. In 2018, he received his PhD in History from the University of Edinburgh. He is currently a Fellow of the Royal Society for History in the United Kingdom and was a recipient of the Liechtenstein Prize in 2023 for his book *The American Revolution and the Habsburg Monarchy* (Charlottesville, 2022).

Tatjana Trautmann studied history and politics in Kiel (Christian-Albrechts-Universität). She is currently working on her PhD thesis on foreign diplomats at the Russian court in the year 1762. From 2011 until 2018, she served as an assistant and lecturer for Eastern European history in the history department at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel (CAU). Since 2018, she has been

working on a scientific project about the archives of the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in the Federal Library of Schleswig-Holstein. She is currently a member of the team preparing a digital edition of Tönnies' letters.

Michelle Waldispühl is Professor in German Linguistics at the University of Oslo, Norway. She specialises in philology, Germanic language history, and language acquisition. She has worked on historical orthography, especially in runes and names, on multilingualism, language contact and cryptography, and is interested in sociolinguistic, interdisciplinary and digital approaches to historical linguistic data. She received her doctorate in German linguistics at the University of Zurich in 2013 with a thesis on South Germanic runes and her cumulative habilitation at the University of Gothenburg in 2019 with studies on language contact and multilingualism in personal names and the didactics of German as a second language. From 2015 to 2023, she was Associate Professor in German linguistics and language acquisition at the University of Gothenburg, where she led and co-led research projects on personal names and historical cryptology.

Ellen R. Welch studied comparative literature and literary theory at the University of Pennsylvania and received her doctorate in 2008 with a thesis on exoticism in early modern novels. Since 2008, she has taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is currently Professor of French & Francophone Studies. She is the author of *A Taste for the Foreign: Worldly Knowledge and Literary Pleasure in Early Modern French Fiction* (Newark, 2011) and *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia, 2017) and co-editor, with Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding, of *Cultural Intermediaries/Intermédiaires culturels* (Paris, 2015).

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Part I

Introduction



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1 Languages of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World

An Introduction*

Gleb Kazakov and Vladislav Rjéoutski

The Social History of Language

In the 1980s, in a book with the programmatic title *The Social History of Language*, Peter Burke famously claimed that “language is too important historically to leave it to the linguists”. He argued that language is intricately entwined with processes of social interaction and change and asserted that social historians should afford it greater attention than they had so far.¹

Thinking about language as a reflection of social, class, race and gender relations (that also fashions them) places the human actor in the centre. This trend distances itself from the Saussurean tradition in linguistics, which left no room for human agency and “radically severed language from culture”.²

The redefinition of the relationship between language and human agency began in the first half of the twentieth century, notably in the works of Ramon Menéndez Pidal and Ferdinand Brunot.³ Subsequently, William Labov, Peter Trudgill and other sociolinguists made a theoretical and methodological leap which allowed the recovery of the social dimension of language practices by insisting on the role of speakers in language innovation.⁴ This shift made it possible to think of the historicity of language “as a dynamic relationship with context”.⁵

However, Burke went further by integrating language “within a culturally and sociologically relevant theory of communication”. The main purpose of a social history of language, according to José Del Valle, may not be “the identification of variables and their social correlates”. Rather, language is

conceived of not as an isolated entity whose nature is to be identified and explained but as an integral part of a sociologically defined object [...]

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through which to pursue an ethnographic and sociological understanding of a particular community.⁶

Characterising the present-day situation, however, John Gallagher and Purba Hossain have stressed that “language remains relatively marginal as a subject of historical analysis”.⁷ To create original works centred on language as their object of research, historians can benefit from the insights of historical sociolinguistics, historical pragmatics and corpus linguistics.⁸ To do so, they need not fear transgressing disciplinary boundaries; they must actively integrate methods from other disciplines into historical research without being afraid of distorting their field.⁹

With the development of nation states in Europe, national entities were progressively identified with linguistic integrity. Unconsciously, we tend to project today’s mental association between state boundaries and language practices to other periods in the history of Europe. However, the early modern period, which is the primary focus of this book, was characterised by a lack of strong correlation between political entities and language usages, and the connection between political and linguistic identities was loose.

Early modern diplomats are a particularly intriguing and relevant group for a study of the social and cultural roles of languages. The ‘professional’¹⁰ activity of diplomats was closely tied to multilingual environments within cosmopolitan speech communities in which diplomats had to make linguistic choices based on a variety of criteria studied in this volume. Furthermore, a considerable part of this ‘professional’ community had close ties to the upper classes. Diplomats’ communication often mirrored their social interactions, leading to a complex linguistic landscape that is challenging for twenty-first-century observers to grasp.

In this introduction, we briefly explore important questions that contextualise the studies in this volume.

The first part of the introduction provides a concise overview of the disciplinary framework underpinning these studies. We clarify our primary focuses, detailing the objects of inquiry, the approaches and methods that the authors use or that can be used in this field of research, as well as challenges that may arise from these methodological choices.

In the second part, we address some prevalent narratives in the social and cultural history of languages. More specifically, we focus on the narrative about Latin as the primary *lingua franca* of early modern diplomacy which French eventually supplanted, emphasising the expansive timeframe and uneven nature of this evolution. We offer a brief survey of language patterns across various regions of Europe, highlighting the differences we might trace between these zones. We discuss the significance of vernaculars versus the rise of French as a key factor in understanding shifts in diplomatic languages, and we explore the relation between language use and the imperative of secrecy in early modern diplomacies.

In the third part, we consider the actors themselves. To what extent was the use of foreigners, on the one hand, and translators and interpreters, on the other, a solution to the communicative challenges faced by diplomats in multilingual settings? Did early modern diplomats possess the linguistic expertise necessary to navigate

this multilingual context independently? Our enquiry also extends to exploring the linguistic roles of various diplomatic personnel and the degree to which the available sources allow us to understand their linguistic contributions. Finally, we briefly address the linguistic roles that European diplomats played in the global context during the early modern period.

The essays in this volume are organised into three sections, each dedicated to a specific aspect of research on language use in early modern diplomacy. The first section examines the long and uneven shift towards the dominance of French in the eighteenth-century diplomacies of several states within the Holy Roman Empire. Contributions by Gleb Kazakov, Tatjana Trautmann, and Nina Pösch address the dissemination of French in the diplomacies of the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Prussia, and various other estates of the Holy Roman Empire, respectively.

The second section focuses on the reasons behind language choice, career strategies and the role of secrecy in relation to language. Sophie Holm explores the language choices of Swedish diplomats in the eighteenth century; Vladislav Rjéoutski does the same for the Spanish diplomacy of the era; Maria A. Petrova highlights the importance of language proficiency in the careers of two Russian diplomats of German origin; and Michelle Waldispühl and Beáta Megyesi analyse the implications of language choice in the use of diplomatic ciphers in the eighteenth century, as part of their work on the research project ‘Decrypt’, led by Beáta Megyesi.¹¹

The third and final section examines the linguistic practices of diplomatic and para-diplomatic actors from non-European powers or in non-European contexts. Christopher Joby discusses linguistic practice and communication challenges faced by the Dutch East India Company in Taiwan; Irena Fliter addresses shifts in language policies in Ottoman diplomacy in the second half of the eighteenth century; and Ellen Welch and Jonathan Singerton recount the experiences of the first American diplomats in francophone Europe at the end of the early modern period.

I

Diplomatic Languages and New Diplomatic History

The questions addressed in this collection of essays are central to new directions in historical research that have assumed prominence in recent decades, from transnational history and the study of ‘cultural transfers’ to ‘entangled history’ and new diplomatic history (NDH). Despite their differences, these approaches share a common focus on individual agency and view cultural processes as contingent on specific contextual factors. Diplomats, as well as their linguistic choices, are especially suitable subjects for this kind of research, as they were the ultimate transnational actors. They played a key role as agents of cultural transfers, channelling new cultural practices into their home countries and projecting elements of their own cultures abroad.

Our modern understanding of international relations is generally shaped by our assumptions regarding state sovereignty and international law, as well as a

tendency to focus on ‘professional’ diplomatic corps. From this angle, early modern diplomacy was traditionally perceived as ‘primitive’. Recently, scholars began developing the agenda of NDH, balancing between social and cultural histories of foreign policy.¹² This approach helped to re-evaluate early modern diplomacy and discover new directions for research.¹³ More specifically, practitioners of NDH question the focus on states as the sole agents of international relations and stress the importance of studying sociocultural practices in the field of diplomacy.¹⁴ They conceptualise diplomatic activity as a social-political practice and explore the diplomats’ own agency.¹⁵ This approach entails shifting our attention from career diplomats to a wide range of non-official actors,¹⁶ including women;¹⁷ paying attention to the role of consuls, which previous scholarship has largely ignored;¹⁸ considering diplomats in the variety of roles they performed and the social milieus they inhabited;¹⁹ and exploring intercultural and inter-confessional diplomatic relations,²⁰ symbolic communications in the context of diplomatic encounters,²¹ and the role of gift-giving.²² NDH also calls for an extension of the chronological and geographical scope of our research.²³

In recent years, research within the framework of NDH has developed through a range of research projects and groups of researchers, such as the TORCH Network on Diplomacy in the Early Modern Period 1400–1800 in Oxford;²⁴ the AHRC-funded research project “Translating Cultures: The Languages of Diplomacy between the Early-Modern and Modern Worlds” in Durham;²⁵ and the Global Diplomacy Network.²⁶

Studying the use of languages in diplomacy, with its focus on cultural and social practices, clearly belongs to the agenda of NDH. However, until recently, studies of this subject were rather limited in geographical span and based on a narrow set of mostly published sources.²⁷ In recent decades, research on the role of languages in diplomacy in early modern Europe has developed following the agenda of NDH.²⁸ A considerable part of research on the use of languages in diplomacy focused on peace negotiations.²⁹ We should particularly highlight the output of the research project “Translation services in diplomacy and media in the premodern peace process. Europe 1450–1789/1815”;³⁰ numerous publications on diplomatic translation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia with a major recent study by Daniel C. Waugh and Ingrid Maier;³¹ Guido Braun’s exploration of language practices at peace congresses,³² which is continued and developed in this volume through a study of language use at peace congresses in the last third of the seventeenth century; Thomas Weller’s research on linguistic interaction between Spanish and Hanseatic diplomats; and, recently, a collective volume on languages and diplomacy co-edited by Guido Braun, Camille Desenclos, and Renaud Meltz; and a collective volume on translation in early modern diplomacy co-edited by Vladislav Rjéoutski, Guido Braun, Indravati Félicité, and Sophie Holm.³³ Another important trend in this field is the exploration of the recommendations of early modern authors of manuals of the “perfect ambassador” and the study of early modern training for diplomats.³⁴

Recently, three international conferences united researchers working on the use of languages in diplomacy.³⁵ This collective volume follows the conference

“Languages of Diplomacy in the Eighteenth-Century World” organised by Vladislav Rjéoutski in January 2022 at the German Historical Institute in Moscow; however, it is complemented by other articles that did not originate with this conference.³⁶ The conference and the present volume are part of a three-year international research project on the languages of eighteenth-century Russian diplomacy in a European context funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), which we wish to thank for its support.

The approach of this volume is new insofar as it is based on the exploration of considerable corpora of unpublished archival diplomatic documents. Furthermore, it particularly explores segments of diplomatic correspondence which have rarely been studied. Its focus is on language practices among diplomats in their everyday communication, both external (i.e., among diplomats of different countries) and internal (i.e., among diplomats of the same country).

Objects of Study and Theoretical Framework

In the early modern period, European diplomacy was multilingual, as it still is to a certain extent, despite the ascendancy of English as a contemporary diplomatic *lingua franca*. *Lingua francas* undeniably played a major role in early modern diplomacies; however, this epoch also witnessed the rise of vernaculars whose symbolic value was growing. The evolution of linguistic practices in diplomacy was a complex, continuous interplay between the major *lingua francas* and various vernacular languages. While most of the latter could not assume the same pan-European or regional intermediary role, diplomats continued to acknowledge their significance as symbols of sovereignty and, subsequently, (proto-)national identity. Keeping this multilingual system in mind, it becomes evident why early modern diplomats constantly had to make language choices. This book explores the reasons, conditions and consequences of such choices by diplomats. In this section, we review some analytical concepts which can be useful for our field of research.

Cultural histories of languages generally focus on two major questions: on the one hand, they study the actual language practices and explain their evolution; on the other, they explore the language attitudes expressed in more or less detailed comments on language practice and decisions regulating them.

Sources that give insight into language attitudes and the variety of reactions to language practices are useful for the study of the political and normative history of languages. In the view of Guespin and Marcellesi, any decision or measure “altering the social distribution of speech”³⁷ is glottopolitical insofar as it designates an individual or group as a legitimate speaker and prescribes a certain language use. Some swift changes in the use of languages in the field of diplomacy were the result of linguistic policies.³⁸ One example is Frederick II’s decision to impose French as the language of internal correspondence in Prussian diplomacy in the 1740s, explored by Trautmann here.

However, generally, early modern diplomacies were characterised by a surprising paucity of clearly articulated state regulations, official instructions and even commentary on language use. The era of language planning—that is, conscious

collective action—was yet to come.³⁹ This is not unique to diplomacy. Studying the history of the French language in pre-revolutionary Russia, researchers have observed a similar phenomenon: actors rarely indulged in comments on their language practice.⁴⁰

The absence of meta-discourse regarding language use can be attributed to the presumed sense of normality shared by the majority of actors, who saw little need to comment on generally accepted language practices. As external observers who examine linguistic changes across extended time periods through historical documents, researchers can find this phenomenon surprising. However, for historical actors immersed in linguistic practices, these changes may have been invisible.

Due to the near-absence of explicit discussions on language use and language policies in our research domain, certain facets of the usual agenda of social and cultural historians of languages may remain inaccessible to historians studying the use of languages in early modern diplomacy. Thus, we usually cannot focus on the analysis of language attitudes and debates. We also face limitations in exploring ideologies through which authorities and other groups mediated and legitimised their goals when implementing specific language strategies.⁴¹ The only fields in which sources clearly express language attitudes and language strategies seem to be court audiences and peace congresses, during which language use often became an object of numerous discussions and even conflicts, as Braun reminds us in his article in this volume.

Therefore, most of the authors here concentrate on describing diplomats' actual language practices, a domain that has received little attention from historians and sociolinguists thus far. The scarcity of regulations and commentary governing these practices prompts us to seek alternative approaches, such as the use of a broader context to interpret the evolution of diplomatic language practices. Although, at first glance, general debates on language and national identities in early modern speech communities had no connection with diplomacy, they can sometimes shed light on certain language practices and regulations in diplomacy. For example, it is by no means a coincidence that the *ukase* of Catherine II regulating the use of languages in diplomatic reports addressed to the monarch—namely, Russian diplomats' obligation to use Russian in this genre of documents—was adopted in the 1780s, precisely when discussions about language occurred in the Russian press, and when several reforms (the foundation of the Russian Academy, major changes in educational institutions, etc.) stressed the value and prominent position that authorities aimed to grant the national language.⁴²

This being said, an attentive observer can still discern certain reactions to language use in diplomacy that amount to a form of linguistic commentary. For example, during the 1720s and 1730s, Russian diplomats sometimes apologised for using French in their internal diplomatic correspondence, which was typically conducted in Russian during that period.⁴³ Guespin and Marcellesi highlight the relevance of what they term “normative correction” for the study of language policies, irrespective of whether the intention was political and repressive.⁴⁴ Building on this observation, we could interpret such apologies for language choices as instances of glottopolitics because they implicitly refer to a norm, even if, in most cases, that norm was not clearly articulated. In essence, such cases may be viewed

as manifestations of “normative conflicts”.⁴⁵ In our broad understanding, normative policies might manifest themselves not only in official decisions by authorities and remarks regarding language practices but also in firm adherence to a specific language choice, which might be interpreted as an expression of normative ideas on language use.

Adopting the glottopolitical perspective, we might speak of “culturally hegemonic layers” insofar as bureaucratic circles could have had a considerable impact on the regulation of language choices in diplomacy, as could diplomats, who were not passive agents but norm bearers and “norm propagators”.⁴⁶ How and to what extent could these actors regulate language choices in diplomacy? Were normative policies clearly articulated, as in the case of Prussia, explored by Trautmann, or implicit, as in the cases of Spain, as studied by Rjéoutski, and the USA, addressed by Singerton and Welch? These are some of the questions that hold interest for us.

Two more partly overlapping conceptual approaches could be useful for our research. The ecology of languages, first proposed by Einar Haugen and later developed and adapted by other sociolinguists, represents a relevant perspective for our research because it concerns the interactions between languages and their environment, including various cultural, political, social, and even physical factors.⁴⁷ Critical discourse analysis addresses mechanisms of power in discourse, but it also examines the whole “setting, i.e., the location in time and space, the situation, the institution, and finally the societal and historical norms and values which frame the specific discursive event”.⁴⁸ The evolution of language practices in diplomacy was undeniably impacted by the wider environment, including trends in elites’ education, the political and cultural weight of various powers, and the development of (proto-)national consciousness and the rise of vernaculars. This breadth of analysis is difficult to achieve. The Swedish case that Holm analyses in this volume exemplifies a research agenda that combines the social, cultural, language, and institutional histories of Sweden.

Attitudes regarding the use of languages and the reasons for language choices in diplomacy were rooted in ideas about the value and political status of each language. The languages which diplomats could potentially use did not hold equal cultural, political, and symbolic significance for them. Sociolinguists often describe those which, in the speakers’ view, possessed such value in terms of “prestige languages”.⁴⁹

In the historical context of early modern Europe, when French was becoming the preferred sociolect of European nobilities, the concept of prestige accurately reflects the view of French as a High language.⁵⁰ Indeed, the preference for one language over another for reasons of prestige was ubiquitous in the early modern period spanning from the invention of printing and the following standardisation of vernaculars to the rise of nationalism, which discouraged the use of foreign languages in parallel with the national language.⁵¹

Supporting the understanding of diglossia proposed by Joshua Fishman, we consider that most communicative situations in early modern diplomacies were diglossic.⁵² Indeed, diplomats had to choose systematically between two and often more languages at their disposal based on their social, cultural, or ‘professional’ values. This happened not only in external communication, such as with diplomats

from other countries, but sometimes in internal exchanges between diplomats of one country.⁵³

Despite the absence of meta-discourse, we can still determine the functional distribution of the languages used and the social or 'professional' value or status ascribed to these languages by analysing the choices the actors made and the broad environment of these language practices. Moreover, we can sometimes reconstruct the ideologies and the political and social views which underpinned the language choices through which actors could express their loyalty or negotiate their power positions.⁵⁴

Some cases of diglossia in diplomatic settings were undoubtedly based on asymmetries of power positions. This happened particularly in relatively formal types of communication (such as the peace congresses and negotiations explored in this volume by Braun and, in a recent book, by Weller)⁵⁵ and, not infrequently, even in routine correspondence (as in the case of exchanges between Spanish and French or Spanish and Dutch diplomats, which Rjéoutski explores in this volume). Internal correspondence, particularly its vertical dimension (i.e., exchanges between diplomats and their minister or their monarch), was also a case of asymmetric power relations because the choice of languages on the part of diplomats was by no means free; rather, it followed a tacit rule or tradition to which diplomats had to adhere. Though often monolingual, internal correspondence could still be considered a case of diglossia if placed in a broader context, that is, compared to the diplomats' horizontal internal exchanges, in which the parallel use of two languages, the domestic language and French (or, more rarely, German or Italian), was common and more or less legitimised. We might say that, unlike the Austro-Hungarian language practices of the nineteenth century,⁵⁶ in this case, the relationship between the right to communicate in one's own language and the positions of power was reversed.

However, not all cases of diglossia in early modern diplomacy refer to power relations or correspond to the standard description of diglossia, which typically involves a shift between High and Low languages or varieties of the same language. Some of the language choices that diplomats made might have pursued purely pragmatic goals. One counterargument against the qualification of some languages used in diplomacy in diglossic situations as High or Low concerns Russian and Swedish internal diplomatic correspondence in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ In many sources, languages do not seem to be hierarchised in terms of their social prestige (or lack thereof) but rather in terms of official/private or formal/informal. In this situation, code-switching helped diplomats to better mark the limits between 'professional' and mundane or personal topics.⁵⁸ In other words, in some genres of diplomatic documentation, French can by no means be considered a High language, while in other spheres, such as noble sociability, it was undeniably a High idiom and was seen as a language of politeness, civilisation, universalism or, later, modernity.⁵⁹

Let us reflect on one more point, that of evidence. Evidence about the written language practices of early modern diplomats, at least their official correspondence, is abundant. However, what about oral communication? In general, as Burke

has stressed, sources that provide information about the oral practices of the people who lived in the early modern period can be found, and the most useful are probably the descriptions left by foreign travellers who sometimes remarked on the pronunciation and vocabulary used among the people of the countries they visited.⁶⁰ Within the field of diplomacy, however, such sources are very rare. Browsing collections of archival documents left by European diplomats, we find few comments on the languages that diplomats used during oral interactions. Probably the most frequent indications are those which concern audiences at the court, when foreign diplomats traditionally had to deliver speeches in front of the monarch and other members of the monarch's family.⁶¹ In the archives, we often find the written versions of these speeches or descriptions of such ceremonies in which information about the languages used is generally recorded.⁶²

However, for everyday oral contacts, the language was usually indicated only when its use caused surprise, as Kazakov demonstrates in his article: a Mecklenburgian envoy at the court of Copenhagen could not help but mention that his Russian counterpart unexpectedly addressed him in Italian. When diplomats quoted what their colleagues said, they often did so in the language used during the conversation. However, this was by no means the general rule. For example, as Rjéoutski has shown, in the 1770s, the reports of the Spanish ambassador to the Prussian court, Las Casas, frequently quoted what other foreign diplomats or Prussian ministers told him, but he always did so in Spanish, conforming to a tacit rule used in Spanish internal correspondence, although the language used in these conversations was certainly French rather than Spanish. In sum, sources that indicate what languages were used among diplomats for oral interactions are certainly reliable (it is difficult to imagine that a diplomat would have distorted reality in such cases) but scarce. In this situation, the focus of the authors in this book is on written communication. Information about oral interactions is certainly considered and sometimes sheds light on language choices in written interactions, as the articles on Spain and the USA demonstrate.

Finally, we would like to clearly indicate the topics that the authors of this book do not engage with. The history of language use in diplomacy is connected to the relatively new field of research on specialised languages.⁶³ This field has long been regarded as concerning only practical activities and, for this reason, was thought to lack broader significance.⁶⁴ Focus on the development of 'professional' terminology is central to this research. The study of terminology, particularly the borrowing of terms (and concepts), is indeed a relevant topic for the social and cultural history of languages.⁶⁵ In certain periods and for specific languages, such borrowings were abundant, as in the case of Russian in the age of Peter I. Through this process of large-scale word-borrowing, the Russian language was considerably enriched, and terminology began to develop in many specialised fields, such as mining, the navy, engineering, architecture, medicine, political science, etc. This process also influenced Russian diplomatic terminology and, more broadly, the language of diplomacy.⁶⁶ Translation was an important channel through which foreign terms penetrated into vernacular languages, ultimately contributing to the formation of national terminologies in various domains, including diplomacy.⁶⁷ Term-borrowing

within early modern professions is a fascinating process which can be analysed in various speech communities to shed light on their evolving cultural and linguistic orientations.

Another relevant topic which is not (systematically) explored in this book is language variation, change and proficiency. If this study focuses on language choice and not on morphological, syntactic, or lexical change, it is due to the nature of our sources and the characteristics of communication in this domain. It is true that archival diplomatic sources from this period are abundant and consist primarily of contemporary original documents, which can hardly be described as 'bad data'. We argue, however, that these sources are characterised by a degree of standardisation and hypercorrection, driven by the need for transcultural and transnational comprehensibility, as well as the dissemination of diplomatic language standard and style, resulting in limited morphological and syntactic variability in these sources which probably do not reflect the oral language of early modern diplomats.

Moreover, in most cases, diplomatic correspondence was dictated by diplomats to scribes or secretaries whose ethnic and social identities, as well as cultural outlooks, often remain unknown. These individuals were in some cases not native speakers of the languages used in these documents. In other words, the morphological features of their language use may not reflect linguistic changes occurring in their social and ethnic groups but rather the standardised form used for teaching the major European languages used in diplomacy at the time.⁶⁸

The personal language proficiency of early modern diplomats, particularly in diplomatic *lingua franca*s such as French, is of course of interest for our exploration, as it is directly related to the educational standards in the milieu within which diplomats were recruited.⁶⁹ Some attention is given to this subject in the present volume (see, for example, the articles by Holm, Kazakov, Rjéoutski, Singerton and Welch) but generally, the authors focus on other questions such as language choice in diplomatic communication, the reasons for it and linguistic policies in the field of diplomacy, leaving terminology, language variation and proficiency aside.⁷⁰

Approaches and Methods

The authors here use the methods and concepts of the social history of languages and historical sociolinguistics⁷¹ given their relevance for language and social authority, linguistic policies, and the use of languages to establish cultural difference or hegemony, or as a unifying force.⁷² In what follows, rather than reviewing the methods relevant to our field of research, we provide a series of remarks about the possibilities and limitations of applying some of these methods to the study of linguistic practices in diplomacy.

The traditional comparative method can be applied, at least to some extent, to diplomatic correspondence. The relatively formalised character of some genres of diplomatic communication (e.g., royal correspondence) and the similarity of the contexts in which European diplomats communicated and had to make language

choices make the comparative method an appropriate approach for some parts of our research agenda. However, we should not forget that this method

is most relevant where there is common causation and a relatively unmixed result. In history this appears only in specific contexts, and never for an unlimited period of time. The effectiveness of the historian's method is limited by the fact that the discipline has found no immutable natural laws nor even any persistent morphologies of human institutions.⁷³

The interconnected character of the practices and networks and the looseness of ties between ethnicity and state loyalty in early modern diplomacies might require different conceptual frameworks and analytical tools. Going beyond comparison, it is important to draw on the approaches that students of cultural transfers and entangled history (*histoire croisée*) have developed; they have refused to view the entities they compare as rigid and impenetrable.⁷⁴ Indeed, diplomats constantly interacted with each other through letter exchanges and oral encounters. However, the results of such interactions are generally hard to detect, not least because of the lack of metalinguistic comments noted above.

Some studies demonstrate the possibility of using quantitative methods for research in the field of the social history of languages.⁷⁵ The quantitative approach is undoubtedly an asset for research on the linguistic practices of a speech community, especially over a long period, and some authors here apply it (e.g., the articles by Holm and by Waldispühl and Megyesi in this volume). However, it is important to reflect on the limits of the use of the quantitative method in this field.

Indeed, its use must be approached with caution. *Firstly*, the applicability of statistical tools depends on the possibility of constituting a corpus of documents that is not only large enough but also uniform and representative of the language uses observed in preserved diplomatic documents. However, diplomatic archives often constitute some of the largest archival collections. Processing such large corpora of documents would require a colossal effort, which is hardly possible for small research teams, let alone individual researchers.

Secondly, diplomatic documentation encompasses a wide range of genres with their specificities. There is external correspondence from diplomats with colleagues from other countries. There is also internal correspondence among the diplomats of a country, in which one can distinguish horizontal exchanges (conducted by diplomats who are not subordinate to each other) from vertical correspondence (when diplomats write to their hierarchical superiors and vice versa). It is also possible to distinguish correspondence that diplomats address to their monarch (which, in practice, the monarch may not always have read; instead, it may have been the foreign minister, but the degree of formality and, consequently, language choices often differ from ordinary vertical internal correspondence). Finally, there are also diplomatic speeches and royal letters, typically prepared by diplomats. These genres of documents have distinct characteristics and dynamics regarding language choice.

Thirdly, diplomats had to consider the established linguistic traditions in relations with specific countries. These traditions could change relatively quickly in some cases and very slowly in others. For example, correspondence between monarchs (often conducted by diplomats, while monarchs merely signed the letters) could change slowly due to its high formality and symbolism, unlike routine diplomatic correspondence, especially at the horizontal level, where changes were more rapid. One example of a swift change in linguistic practices is again Prussia, a case which Trautmann explores here.

Fourthly, diplomats' personal language preferences could manifest at the horizontal level more frequently than at the vertical level because the heads of diplomatic posts often had some freedom regarding language choice in less formal exchanges. Their language skills, as well as their personal ideas about language usage and functions, could have a considerable impact on the linguistic practice of the assigned post. This freedom was sometimes limited by the unavailability of secretaries with necessary language skills, a very important factor during the eighteenth century due to the lack of personnel. In summary, we face a complex, constantly evolving system. In many cases, treating different cases together using statistical tools seems counterproductive. However, the studies published in this volume emphasise that a cautious application of quantitative methods to document series can effectively complement a qualitative analysis of individual documents within their broad context.⁷⁶

Moreover, the warnings regarding the use of quantitative methods we have just outlined do not mean that discussing the dissemination of certain language patterns is impossible.⁷⁷ By examining archival documents, we can identify the possibilities of language choices in similar contexts and note which were prevalent and which were rare. While this approach may seem subjective, as it does not rely on clear quantification, it appears useful in many cases. Our research experience suggests that, in the case of diplomatic documents, we mostly encounter linguistic practices that were so widespread that they constituted the overwhelming majority of cases that can be clearly identified as language patterns. For example, as Rjéoutski shows, throughout the eighteenth century, Spanish diplomats exclusively used Spanish in their internal correspondence; exceptions to this rule were extremely rare and involved only Spanish diplomats of foreign origin.

We begin the next section by addressing some classic historiographical narratives about how the international language of communication developed in early modern European diplomacy.

II

From Latin to French: New Approaches to the Old Narrative

The traditional view saw two stages in the evolution of language practices in European diplomacy.⁷⁸ Beginning in the high Middle Ages, Latin became a universal language of the church, the judicial and legal system, and university education

throughout Catholic Europe. Knowledge of Latin was deemed essential not only for the clergy but also for a well-raised, educated person in general, a member of the early modern “Republic of Letters”.⁷⁹ A dense network of universities, which covered most of Europe by the end of the seventeenth century and where Latin remained the only language of instruction, contributed to the general acceptance of Latin as the universal “mother tongue of the learned” (*lingua eruditorum vernacula*). Well-educated European nobles and monarchs could often understand and speak the language. Latin was also largely considered a neutral language in diplomacy. It was thus only natural that, once a system of permanent diplomatic connections between European states began to take shape from the late fifteenth century,⁸⁰ Latin began serving as the main diplomatic *lingua franca*. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Latin became the preferred language for diplomatic treaties, ambassadors’ ceremonial speeches and correspondence between monarchs, and its pinnacle was probably around 1600. At the end of the first all-European conflict—the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648)—the peace treaties of both Münster and Osnabrück were written in Latin.

However, by the second half of the seventeenth century, the significance of Latin as an international language of communication started to wane. A new cultural leader and fashion-setter emerged: France under the Sun-King, Louis XIV. The court at Versailles set a model of gallant culture, and the French language rapidly gained in popularity among the European nobility, with learning and speaking French becoming a matter of prestige. Those involved in shaping European politics at the numerous diplomatic conferences at the end of the seventeenth and the dawn of the eighteenth centuries found that communicating in French was simply easier and more efficient than using old-fashioned Latin. Thus, by the beginning of the age of Enlightenment, French had replaced Latin as the main language of diplomatic interactions. This narrative rightfully garnered significant criticism, and its critics have noted several blind spots.

Firstly, the adherence to Latin did not end abruptly at the end of the seventeenth century. Although the peace treaty of Rastatt in 1714 was famously composed in French,⁸¹ some subsequent treaties between the French king and the emperor were written in Latin. French appeared in the Vienna convention in 1736 and in the Treaty of Aachen in 1748.⁸² After that point, it became standard even for treaties between German-speaking parties, as, for example, the Peace of Hubertusburg between Prussia and Austria in 1763, to be concluded in French. However, Latin remained in use in diplomacy, especially at the emperor’s court in Vienna, where it was not fully abandoned until the dissolution of the Empire in 1806. As the article by Nina Pösch in this volume demonstrates, Latin was still used in the correspondence between the French monarchy and the territories of the Holy Roman Empire during the eighteenth century, albeit mostly in a ceremonial context. Pösch underlines that, as the main language of diplomatic exchanges between the Empire and other European states, Latin may have come to be perceived as the language of one powerful polity rather than a neutral language, a shift that could have contributed to its decline in the field of diplomacy.

Secondly, although Latin served as a language of international treaties, royal letters, and ceremonial speeches, it was too cumbersome for maintaining regular correspondence, for example, when an envoy was expected to report important news back to the authorities at home, or for informal oral interactions; instead, vernacular languages were commonly used for these types of diplomatic communication throughout the early modern period.⁸³ Although Latin was occasionally used for oral interactions, for example during peace congresses, these instances were rare. For example, in the early seventeenth century, diplomatic representatives from Hanseatic cities visiting Spain were not successful in their attempts to communicate in Latin with Spanish and other foreign diplomats at the Spanish court. This highlights that long before the eighteenth century, Latin was not the obvious choice for oral interactions between diplomats.⁸⁴

Thirdly, both oral and everyday written communication between diplomats in the early modern era was never fully dominated by one sole *lingua franca*. If the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century view of French as a “universal” language with a pan-European influence or, to use a French highly connoted word, *rayonnement*, is no longer shared by any serious researcher, it is still useful to emphasise the pragmatic and cultural plurilingualism of the whole early modern period, of which Francophonie was only one aspect.⁸⁵

Latin, French, and other vernaculars coexisted during this period as language consciousness grew across Europe.⁸⁶ The functions of vernacular languages became an object of attention for scholars as well as religious and social reformers.⁸⁷ As early as the late Middle Ages, vernaculars began to gain greater value, eventually leading to their acceptance as the principal languages of state administration, trade, and news circulation. In the field of science, Latin and vernaculars coexisted for centuries within “overlapping and mutually influencing communities”.⁸⁸ Vernacular languages also spread in empirical investigations, and progressively in mathematics and natural philosophy, as well as in the communication of scientific societies.⁸⁹

Diplomacy was by no means an exception. Italian became popular as a mediation language already in the sixteenth century;⁹⁰ German was naturally widespread in diplomacy in the Holy Roman Empire, as well as in Northern Europe; and British diplomats and high dignitaries exchanged letters with their Spanish counterparts in Spanish or in French starting from the seventeenth century, if not before.⁹¹ During the conferences preceding the peace of Westphalia, diplomats spoke with each other in Italian, German, Dutch, and French.⁹² The situation in the early modern European world of diplomacy could best be described as multilingualism when a diplomat was expected to speak several languages depending on the situation and court to which he was sent. As Braun argues in this volume, communication between diplomats at the congresses in the second half of the seventeenth century was “fundamentally multilingual”, and French only gradually began to be perceived as a “*langue tierce par excellence*”, that is, a neutral language.⁹³ If we lack precise data about the ratio of Latin to vernacular *lingua francas* in various types of diplomatic communication at the beginning of the early modern period and at its end, archival collections of diplomatic documents across various European

countries suggest that the parallel use of Latin and vernaculars in diplomacy is characteristic of the whole period in question.

Moreover, the view of European diplomacies as dominated first by Latin and then by French is a form of Eurocentrism projecting the evolution of language practices in Western and Central Europe onto the entire continent. On the eastern edges of Europe, Latin played a relatively minor role as a tool of diplomatic communication compared to other *lingua francas*: Polish and particularly Tatar. This fact is reflected, for example, in the significant number of Tatar translators and interpreters employed by the chanceries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, later Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Russia before the eighteenth century. Tatar was far more than just a small regional intermediary language as the territory of its diplomatic use was extensive, encompassing Poland-Lithuania, Muscovy, the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean, Kazan and Astrakhan khanates (the latter two having been conquered by Muscovy in the sixteenth century), and occasionally even Persia and China.⁹⁴

In the next section, we will briefly highlight some regional linguistic differences in early modern diplomacy.

Regions of Diplomatic Interactions

Several regions of diplomatic relations in Europe can be identified in which the entanglements between the participating political actors were especially close, leading to the emergence of distinct linguistic cultures.

Since the classical study of Fernand Braudel, the Mediterranean has been identified as one of these regions.⁹⁵ The rivalry and the interaction between three major powers—the Habsburg monarchy, the Republic of Venice and the Ottomans—influenced the region the most in the early modern era. Populated by a multitude of ethnic and cultural groups (Arabs, Greeks, Italians, Jews, Slavs, Spaniards, Turks, etc.), the Mediterranean was always prone to multilingualism.⁹⁶ However, two languages in particular advanced to the status of *lingua franca* in this region starting from the fifteenth century: Italian and Greek. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire conducted its diplomatic exchanges with Venice, Florence, the Holy See, and the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem primarily in Demotic Greek. However, exploring the role of Greek as a diplomatic language between these powers, Nicolas Vatin observed that “it was certainly a common tool but rather as an idiom for recording, or even archiving, than as a language of contact”, because negotiations were often conducted in Italian or Turkish.⁹⁷ Italian became the most common language in the interactions between European diplomats, dragoman interpreters, and Ottoman officials.⁹⁸ It also played an important role as a language of communication in relations between the Spanish and imperial branches of the Habsburg family, at the courts of Madrid and particularly Vienna, in the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century,⁹⁹ and even in diplomatic communication between Muscovy and England in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Its importance in the Mediterranean region remained uncontested long into the eighteenth

century; even one copy of the 1774 Russo-Turkish treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was composed in Italian.¹⁰¹

However, many European diplomats residing in the Ottoman capital in the embassy district in Galata-Pera showed interest and made progress in learning Ottoman Turkish.¹⁰² Venice and France, in particular, repeatedly attempted to train their own interpreters on-site (“*giovani di lingua*”, “*jeunes de langue*”) to avoid dependence on Ottoman dragomans.¹⁰³ The Habsburgs followed suit in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰⁴ Other European states, including the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Russia, and Spain, adopted the practice of sending young noblemen to Istanbul to acquire skills in Oriental languages in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵

The High Porte, on the contrary, heavily relied on the use of their Ottoman Greek subjects as interpreters. Ottoman Turkish remained the language of administration in the empire throughout the whole early modern period, and its mastery became an indicator of belonging to the imperial elite and was obligatory for a career in the Ottoman bureaucracy.¹⁰⁶

Changes in Ottoman diplomacy started to occur under Sultan Selim III (1762–1808).¹⁰⁷ Fliter’s case study of language practices in Ottoman-Prussian relations in the second half of the eighteenth century shows that proficiency in European languages, especially French, became more common for Ottoman ambassadors sent abroad during that period. The reforms of Selim III also introduced a new diplomatic post, *chargé d’affaires*, which was meant to combine the roles of an ambassador and a secretary in one person. The choice usually fell on the members of the Ottoman Greek Phanariot community, who often possessed multiple languages, including French, German, Greek, Italian, and Ottoman Turkish.

In the western part of the Mediterranean, Italian was less commonly in use. Spanish diplomats often did not use Italian when interacting with actors from the Mediterranean region. Spanish itself was striving for the status of an important diplomatic language of communication. Rjéoutski notes in this volume that the expansion of the Spanish monarchy, its weight in European affairs and the popularity of its literature and culture in the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth centuries all contributed to some familiarity with the Spanish language among European diplomats, at least those who were in contact with their Spanish counterparts and the Spanish court, and to a widespread use of Spanish in diplomatic interactions with Spain. Spanish was also in use at the court of Emperor Rudolf II, who occasionally resorted to Spanish when addressing Italian and Dutch diplomats understanding the language.¹⁰⁸

Another region with its own linguistic tradition was the Baltic. Since the heyday of the Hanseatic League in the late Middle Ages, German had been accepted there as the main language of trade operations and the upper urban classes in general.¹⁰⁹ It began playing a similar role in the sphere of diplomatic interactions between the main political actors of the region, such as Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, Poland-Lithuania, Russia, and Sweden.¹¹⁰ Both the crowns of Denmark and Sweden and, starting with the reign of Peter the Great, the Russian Empire eagerly hired well-educated Germans (not necessarily of noble descent) as their agents, residents, and even envoys and ambassadors, since these powers often lacked suitable candidates

among their native nobility, which further contributed to the use of German as a diplomatic *lingua franca* in this region. Almost two-thirds of Swedish diplomats in the seventeenth century were of foreign origin, mostly German, and they often lacked sufficient knowledge of Swedish and preferred to report in German.¹¹¹ If the share of Germans in Russian foreign policy was not as large as in Swedish diplomacy, Germans were well represented in Russian diplomacy as well, and occupied some high positions; the best example is the Vice-Chancellor, Count Heinrich Johann Friedrich Ostermann, who was the de facto head of Russian foreign policy in the 1720s–1730s. German thus continued to serve as a regional *lingua franca* well into the eighteenth century, as demonstrated by Kazakov, who offers a case study of language use within the diplomatic corps of the duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Even at the end of the Great Northern War, German still was used as a regional diplomatic *lingua franca*, as Yana Larina's recent study illustrates.¹¹² Finally, as previously mentioned, Tatar served as a mediator language in Eastern Europe, as did Polish in some cases, particularly before the eighteenth century.

However, all these regional diplomatic *lingua francas* were soon in competition with the new global diplomatic language: French.

Vernacular Languages in Diplomacy: French Versus Other Languages

In a seminal article, Gilles Siouffi contested the view of early modern Francophonie as a lasting pan-European phenomenon, highlighting its apologetic character, its focus on a narrow set of emblematic personalities, and its reliance on references to the languages used in peace treaties. He called on historians and sociolinguists to investigate the “reality” of the use of French in Europe.¹¹³

The present volume is precisely an attempt to explore the extent of the use of French, together with other languages, in early modern diplomacy. Renewing the field that had been until recently largely characterised by the use of a narrow set of mostly published sources, such as personal correspondence and book catalogues, the research presented in this volume draws on a large corpus of diplomatic documents from numerous archives across Europe and beyond. The studies published in this book emphasise that the use of French in diplomacy was a lasting and multifaceted pan-European phenomenon. It encompassed routine diplomatic correspondence, diplomatic audiences, royal letters and even, in some cases, internal communication among diplomats of the same country. Despite its broad reach, the spread of French in diplomacy was marked by considerable regional disparities, correctly noted by Siouffi, and often encountered varying degrees of opposition, particularly in contexts where language choice carried symbolic significance.

Regional differences reflected the resilience of traditions, the complexities of domestic linguistic policies, and the evolving perception of French in diplomatic circles, from the initial close association with France to the acknowledgement of its neutral character. Its progression in diplomacy, along with the tensions it produced and the resistance it sometimes encountered, is among the main themes addressed in this volume.

In the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, French displaced German in some types of diplomatic communication in the Baltic region, sometimes partially and sometimes completely. Danish diplomats, who often used German, began incorporating French into their internal and external communication as early as the seventeenth century. Perhaps the most well-known example of a sudden switch towards the consistent use of French in diplomacy is found in Prussia under Frederick II, who issued a cabinet order in 1740 mandating the use of French. As Trautmann clearly shows in her article in this volume, French swiftly became the main language of Prussian diplomacy, not only in external communication, which was already fairly francophone before this order but in the internal communication of Prussian diplomats as well. Nevertheless, as Trautmann reminds us, German remained the main language of administration and the army in Prussia. This demonstrates the desire of the Prussian government to distinguish between administration and foreign affairs, considering the advantages that the widespread use of French in foreign policy could offer. The context of this linguistic shift, including the turn towards the use of French in the publications of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, which also occurred in the same period on Frederick's initiative, suggests that this linguistic transition in Prussian diplomacy was part of a broad language policy.

This turn towards the more resolute use of French in diplomacy was even more noticeable in relations between the polities of the Holy Roman Empire and France, as Pösch demonstrates. Her article emphasises that this tendency was widespread among both Catholic and Protestant states, small and large, and it thus reflects the growing role of French as the main diplomatic language and the weight of France in European politics, as France insisted on the use of its language when its diplomats were addressed.

What factors explain the turn towards the use of French in diplomacy? This question is not easy to answer for various reasons. The study of the social and cultural history of the French language in European countries is still in its early stages. It is common sense to assume that there is some link between the knowledge of French as a prestigious or learned language and its use in the field of diplomacy, particularly considering the social origin of many early modern European diplomats, who were typically recruited from the social elite.

A rough comparison of seventeenth-century Swedish and Russian diplomacies seems to confirm this hypothesis. The frequent use of French among early modern Swedish diplomats, many of whom were of German origin, likely reflects the progress of French language study in both Sweden and various German states as early as the seventeenth century.¹¹⁴ By contrast, French was hardly ever used by seventeenth-century Russian diplomats, a fact that reflects disinterest in the language among Russian social elites, as Rjéoutski in this volume and a study by Andrei Beliaikov highlight.¹¹⁵

French began to be used by Russian diplomats in the eighteenth century. However, a closer look at the Russian case suggests a possible discrepancy between the use of French by diplomats of a given country and French proficiency among its social elites. While elite Francophonie began to flourish in Russia only during

the reign of Catherine II (1762–1796),¹¹⁶ numerous instances of French usage by Russian diplomats—even in internal correspondence—can be found as early as the first third of the eighteenth century. This suggests that, in some European countries, diplomats were among the first to be exposed to the use of French at European courts and could thus play a pioneering role in introducing it as a tool of sociability in their own countries.

The spread of French in European diplomacies was not always unproblematic and, in some countries, met varying degrees of resistance. It encountered opposition in Spanish diplomacy, driven partly by political reasons, as Rjéoutski shows. Spaniards traditionally viewed French as the language of a dominant polity rather than a neutral linguistic medium. Furthermore, they systematically advocated for Spanish as the preferred language in most diplomatic interactions with European diplomats, implicitly insisting on its status as the language of a world empire. However, in part, this opposition was plainly practical because, prior to the second half of the eighteenth century, when diplomatic Francophonie reached its peak in Europe, many Spanish diplomats, even at the highest level, seemed to lack proficiency in French.

As a newcomer in international politics, the USA presents another intriguing case of resistance to using French as the main European diplomatic *lingua franca*; this resistance was all the more noteworthy because communication among European diplomats was already predominantly in French. After the declaration of American independence in 1776, one can speak about the emergence of the Atlantic theatre of diplomatic interactions. British diplomats could not count on foreigners communicating with them in their own language because English was perceived as a rather marginal European language through most of the early modern era. Thus, British diplomats had to rely on using a *lingua franca*: Italian, Latin and particularly French. However, as Jonathan Singerton and Ellen R. Welch demonstrate in their study, the first American diplomats sent to Europe had a poor command of French and therefore had to use English as a communicative medium. Using English in negotiations with foreign partners was, however, not always a mere act of practical necessity; as in the case of Spanish diplomats' use of Spanish, it could also bear a symbolic meaning: a declaration of the sovereignty of a newly emerged state and a challenge to the established order of linguistic interaction.

Resistance to French and using the language of one's own country were particularly pronounced in spheres where the choice of language was deemed political, such as in bilateral peace treaties and, to a lesser degree, multilateral ones. In the early modern period, we see many cases of strong opposition to drafting peace treaties in French or using French during peace negotiations, particularly when France was one of the negotiating parties, as Braun demonstrates in his article.

Language also acquired symbolic weight in court audiences given to foreign diplomats. An ambassador typically had to use the language of his monarch, at least in the main speech he gave before the monarch of the court where he was posted. This usage persisted for a long time but in many cases, over the course of the eighteenth century, diplomats began using French in such speeches, as they

already used it in other, less formal speeches at the court. This trend is exemplified by Russian diplomats at the British court in the first half of the eighteenth century¹¹⁷ and by Spanish diplomats in Russia in the second half of the eighteenth century, as Rjéoutski shows in his article here. This change particularly concerned countries whose language was not well known in other parts of Europe, such as Russian, Swedish, and English, or which was learned less and less often, like Spanish. However, this type of diplomatic communication is not analysed in this volume, so we do not discuss it in detail here.¹¹⁸

If in external communications such as court audiences, treaties and, to some extent, royal letters, political considerations governed the choice of language, one might think that the logic of language choice would differ for internal communication, that considerations of convenience would guide it and that, in most cases, the preferred language for this type of communication would be the (main) language of the country. However, in reality, this clear-cut scenario was much more complicated.

Indeed, some reasons for the language choice in internal communication were practical. As mentioned above, the presence of foreigners in the diplomatic corps of various European countries was a frequent and sometimes widespread phenomenon throughout the early modern period, as is especially clear in the cases of Sweden in the seventeenth century; to a lesser extent, Spain throughout the early modern period; and Russia in the seventeenth (only translation personnel) and in the eighteenth centuries (middle and even highest diplomatic personnel). In this situation, the use of languages other than the language of the country in internal diplomatic correspondence was difficult to avoid.

After a period when Germans were overrepresented in Swedish diplomacy, more native personnel were recruited into diplomatic service towards the end of the seventeenth century. However, it was only during the Age of Liberty in Sweden (1719–1772), which significantly limited the power of the monarch and increased the role of the Diet and the Council, that reporting in Swedish became a norm. Holm discusses how, apart from a political preference for Swedish as a “national” medium in such communication, Swedish diplomats’ use of foreign languages, either German or French, was pragmatically limited because they were not understood by all potential readers of diplomatic reports at the Diet. Nevertheless, the occasional use of French remained characteristic for the Swedish diplomatic corps throughout the period because francophone tendencies were strong in Swedish high society and filtered into Swedish diplomacy, as we show below. The Russian case was slightly different, as Holm and Rjéoutski argue in their recent article.¹¹⁹ At that time, the leadership of Russian foreign affairs included statesmen who could read and respond in Russian and German. Therefore, at least in the first half of the century, German was, to a certain extent, a legitimate language for this type of correspondence, insofar as the reporting diplomat was foreign and not Russian-born or belonged to German-speaking nobility in Baltic regions annexed by Russia during the Great Northern War. French almost never appeared in ‘vertical’ internal correspondence in Russia during this period.

However, it is not clear whether national consciousness played any role in the traditional use of the domestic language for this type of communication at the time, either in Spain or in Russia. A form of linguistic patriotism only emerged in the second part of the century in Russia. In 1787, Catherine II issued a decree requesting that diplomatic reports addressed to the monarch be submitted in the diplomat's native language.¹²⁰ This decree was intended to create some order in a linguistic practice which was characterised by an increasing use of French and to favour the domestic language, despite the fact that Catherine II was a German-born princess. However, this decision did not preserve Russian from an almost total disappearance from internal diplomatic correspondence by the end of the century.

The Russian case differs from that of Prussia, discussed above. The decision of Frederick II imposed French as the unique medium for Prussian diplomacy and was followed by an almost immediate effect, as Trautmann shows. In Russia, the trend was not only slow but also contrary to the will of the monarch. We might therefore consider different reasons behind the slow disappearance of Russian from this type of diplomatic communication, such as the dissemination of the French language in the highest stratum of the Russian nobility, from whom most high-ranking Russian diplomats were recruited. In other words, the linguistic turn in Russian internal diplomatic correspondence should be attributed primarily to the growing Francophonie of the Russian aristocracy.¹²¹

It is striking that, in the early stages of this process of the gradual displacement of the domestic language by French, the use of French in Russian internal diplomatic correspondence was characteristic of diplomats of modest origin rather than of aristocrats. As Holm and Rjéoutski argue,¹²² such occasional use of French seems to have been a linguistic strategy of diplomats of lower rank in addressing colleagues of higher ranks and social positions. The aim of this strategy was to break free from hierarchical relations by switching from Russian to French, which allowed them to establish a seemingly equal relationship with their high-ranking colleagues. In both Russian and Swedish contexts, French replacing the domestic language could also signal that the user communicated either personal news or political news but unofficially. This example shows that code-switching between a country's language and French could have multiple meanings in the diplomatic sphere and offered diplomats a variety of communicative tools. Exploration of this topic seems very promising for a better understanding of the relation between domestic languages, diplomatic *lingua franca*s, the growing national consciousness and the logic of bureaucratic systems in early modern European societies.

Finally, there was another sphere of early modern diplomacy where actors faced the dilemma of language choice: secret diplomacy and use of ciphers.¹²³ By the middle of the sixteenth century, the use of various encryption methods was already widespread in diplomatic communications in most European states. The ciphers' level of sophistication and the scope of their application grew significantly during the early modern era and peaked during the Seven Years' War in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹²⁴ The study of early modern cryptology, however, has generally focused on encryption methods and the political circumstances of particular

cases of secrecy and espionage in diplomacy while ignoring the linguistic aspect. In a world of multilingual diplomacy, however, an encryptor faced the same choice diplomats did when composing a normal, inconspicuous message: which language to choose? Did the language of the encrypted parts of the letter and the cipher key have to match the language of the rest of the text? Michelle Waldispühl and Beáta Megyesi offer some observations on this question based on the quantitative study of 766 entirely or partially encrypted diplomatic manuscripts from five regions of Europe. As their article demonstrates, the tendencies of language choice in encrypted documents corresponded to the general picture we have drawn so far in this introduction. During the eighteenth century, the use of Latin in both cleartext and plaintext diminished significantly, whereas the use of French became more frequent, and internationally, it advanced to the status of the most accepted language of choice. However, other vernaculars—the local languages of the regions in question—were never entirely abandoned. Thus, in the cases of ciphers from eighteenth-century Hungary and the Netherlands, the respective local languages were generally preferred in internal, secret communications, whereas messages for external counterparts were generally encrypted in French.

Languages and Actors in Early Modern Diplomacies: Communicative Challenges and Solutions

Considering the multilingual nature of early modern European diplomacy, it was not a trivial task for authorities to ensure that all embassies and consulates were adequately staffed with personnel skilled in all required languages.

Several outstanding early modern ambassadors and statesmen were polyglots. One well-known example is Baron Sigismund von Herberstein, an ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor in the first half of the sixteenth century who conducted more than 60 missions to different courts and rulers, including those of Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire, in the span of less than forty years between 1515 and 1553. He spoke Latin, German and Italian and possessed some knowledge of Slavic languages because he was raised in the Duchy of Carniola, in the territory of modern Slovenia.¹²⁵ Another example of a diplomat-polyglot, from the seventeenth century, is the Dutch humanist Constantijn Huygens, who knew at least eight languages and wrote various works, including poems, in several of them.¹²⁶ Some seventeenth-century Hanseatic diplomats to Spain were also polyglots, for example Bernhard Timmerscheid, who knew French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish; Walter Delbrügge, who was proficient in Spanish and “other languages”; or Heinrich Brokes, who mastered French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish.¹²⁷

We must also keep in mind that diplomacy theorists generally recognised the utility of multilingualism for a diplomat, though the list of important languages varied. For example, the author of the well-known treatise *De la manière de négocier avec les Souverains*, François de Callières, requested that diplomats be proficient in at least French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. Justifying the need for a diplomat to be multilingual, theorists invoked reasons such as the necessity of

building networks, collecting information, conducting secret negotiations without using translators, and avoiding misinterpretations and translation mistakes.¹²⁸

However, there were, of course, considerable regional differences, and even within regions that had distinct linguistic traditions, important changes in diplomats' language proficiency occurred over the period. It is not possible to provide here a comprehensive, pan-European overview of early modern diplomats' knowledge of languages because there are no overarching studies of this question so far. Therefore, we limit ourselves to a series of observations.

Knowledge of Latin among European nobilities was diminishing and there were considerable disparities in proficiency in Latin across Europe, as argued above. In some parts of the Habsburgs' monarchy, particularly Croatia, Latin was widespread and readily used, including among the nobility.¹²⁹ In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Latin was also widely known, particularly among the upper nobility, who often went on *peregrinatio academica* in Western European universities in the sixteenth century. Although the number of Polish students in European universities diminished after 1620,¹³⁰ the establishment of a network of schools run by Jesuits in Poland during the seventeenth century offered another opportunity for the Polish nobility to acquire proficiency in Latin. Knowledge of Latin was absolutely necessary for work in the royal chancellery and for participating in political life in Poland.¹³¹ These reasons explain the command of Latin among Polish diplomats during this period. There were not only geographical but also social differences in language proficiency among early modern diplomats. If the nobility was losing interest in learning Latin, diplomats from bourgeois families, for example, those representing the cities of the Hanseatic League in the seventeenth century, were typically university graduates and thus were experienced Latinists.¹³²

Compared to regions where knowledge of Latin was deeply rooted, the case of France differs considerably. Undoubtedly, colleges, particularly those run by Jesuits, and universities were bastions of Latinity throughout the early modern period.¹³³ It was only in the eighteenth century that some use of French in the classroom became possible in French colleges.¹³⁴ However, the importance of learning vernaculars for the upbringing of young nobles became the subject of discussion earlier, at the end of the sixteenth century.¹³⁵ As early as the seventeenth century, both the sword and robe nobilities in France tried to go beyond the limits of the colleges' curricula by learning subjects which were not taught there. Such subjects included French, as it was highly valued in the French court system,¹³⁶ as well as other living languages and mathematics, which were sometimes learned at home with private teachers or in *pensions*.

The case of Russia differed from those of Croatia, Poland and France because, in Russia, Latin was not an integral part of the education of the nobility before or during the eighteenth century. Its presence in the curriculum of the main Russian school for the nobility, the Noble Land Cadet Corps (founded 1731), was episodic and never produced any palpable results.¹³⁷ Moreover, the Russian nobility did not express any interest in university education over the eighteenth century. Instead, Russian aristocrats preferred to study abroad in places like Strasbourg, where a new diplomatic school was founded in 1752. In contrast to the more traditional and

rigid universities, teaching in Strasbourg was closely in tune with current events and agenda.¹³⁸ Young Russians typically took courses in living languages—when possible, in French—thus avoiding university lectures which required a good knowledge of Latin.¹³⁹

Knowledge of living languages also varied considerably across Europe. On the one hand, Germany and Northern Europe in general had a relatively high rate of knowledge of living foreign languages. Some Protestant German universities, such as Jena, Leipzig and Halle, began including living languages in their curriculum in the seventeenth century, and they also allowed lecturing in a vernacular language, typically in German, by the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, many aristocrats in Germany spent long periods abroad as part of a cavalier's tour, an educational trip which generally included major stays in France or Italy and which resulted in a good knowledge of some European languages.¹⁴¹

French was a well-known language in early modern Sweden. The Swedish social elite had access to many ways of learning French through their upbringing at home as well as studies, travels or military service abroad. The role of university education in disseminating French seems to have been considerable in Sweden: before 1718, more than 80% of male Francophone Swedish authors had studied in at least one university, but this ratio decreased in subsequent years, reflecting the language's democratisation in Sweden. The vast majority of officials within the higher Swedish administration had studied at a university. As Margareta Östman has demonstrated,¹⁴² French skills were not limited to the nobility. Even before the Era of Liberty, which began in 1718, about 40% of all Swedish Francophone authors were not noble, and their ratio increased further during the eighteenth century.¹⁴³ The Low Countries and England were also among the countries where French was well-known.¹⁴⁴

On the other hand, some European countries lacked a well-rooted tradition of learning living foreign languages. Before the eighteenth century, both Spain and Russia exemplified this tendency. As Rjéoutski demonstrates, French was neither frequently taught nor well known among Spanish nobles. There are several reasons for this, such as the absence of living languages in the curricula of universities and the main educational institutions for nobility before the eighteenth century; the reduced role of the "Grand Tour" and, in general, of stays abroad in the education and life experience of Spanish nobles; and, certainly, the widespread dissemination of Spanish in Europe in the sixteenth century and part of the seventeenth.

If, in the seventeenth century, the Russian nobility had little skill in living foreign languages, their knowledge developed quickly in the eighteenth century, starting with the reign of Peter I. Stays abroad were particularly helpful in providing many Russian nobles and some commoners with some level of proficiency in the main European languages, particularly Italian and French. Due to the presence of many Germans in Russia in the eighteenth century, German was often taught and was widely known in Russian educational institutions intended for noblemen, at least in the first half of the eighteenth century. Starting in the middle of the century, there was increased interest in learning French beyond the circles of the high nobility. However, the high nobility in Russia distinguished itself through

an excellent knowledge of French, which may have contributed to the success of Russian diplomacy.¹⁴⁵

This short overview highlights that, in some countries, it was difficult to find diplomatic personnel with sufficient knowledge of the main diplomatic languages. One way to circumvent this difficulty was to resort to the services of foreigners. Indeed, some European countries hired foreigners for their diplomatic service, sometimes on a major scale. One such case is Sweden in the seventeenth century, where the proportion of foreigners among diplomatic personnel was overwhelming, as mentioned above. In Saxony, the number of foreigners (not including Germans from the Holy Roman Empire) in foreign affairs in the first half of the eighteenth century was smaller but still around 20%.¹⁴⁶ Spain and Russia, as Rjéoutski and Petrova respectively discuss in this volume, also used this resource. In a recent article, Yana Larina emphasises that Russia was under pressure at the end of the Great Northern War because of a severe lack of translators and diplomats who knew the main diplomatic languages. This shortage determined the choice of German as the language for negotiations at the Åland congress and the exclusion of both the two countries' official languages and of French.¹⁴⁷ However, as Petrova's contribution demonstrates, the foreigners' limited knowledge of Russian posed some problems. The College of Foreign Affairs considered the translation of these diplomats' reports into Russian on a permanent basis to be a useless burden.

States whose local aristocracy was not proficient in foreign languages—such as the Ottoman Empire or Russia before Peter the Great—found another solution to the challenges of multilingual diplomacy. They heavily relied on the use of translators and interpreters. A mission sent abroad was usually headed by a member of the Turkish or Russian high aristocracies, respectively, who was accompanied by one or several interpreters. In both cases, interpreters were usually of foreign descent: the Ottomans preferred to rely on the language skills of Greek subjects,¹⁴⁸ whereas the Muscovite Ambassadorial Chancery employed many Western Europeans who were either descendants of foreign merchants or prisoners of war.¹⁴⁹ Interpreters not only accompanied missions sent abroad; they also provided communication with foreign diplomats in Istanbul and Moscow.

Although this system of diplomatic interactions remained operational over a long period (in Russia, until the reforms of Peter the Great at the start of the eighteenth century, and in the Ottoman Empire, until 1821), it had major flaws, which became evident as soon as both empires entered the world of residential diplomacy. An ambassador who could not communicate on his own was an ineffective intelligence-gatherer, and splitting the tasks of a mission between several people led to complications, complaints and delays.¹⁵⁰ Reliance on dragomans in foreign affairs backfired for the Ottomans when the Greek revolt for independence broke out in 1821, and the loyalty of Greeks was called into question.

With that said, it would certainly be an exaggeration to attribute translators' dependency solely to early modern pre-Petrine Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The use of interpreters was of paramount importance in the process of European colonial expansion, as Joby demonstrates in his examination of the Dutch East India Company's presence in Taiwan. The Dutch employed a wide range of

individuals as interpreters, including former captives, church ministers, and *mestizos* or indigenous Chinese or Formosans, who sometimes used an intermediate language—Spanish or Portuguese—for communication.

The lacking proficiency in important European languages and targeted knowledge necessary for a diplomat has often been discussed by the students of early modern diplomacy in terms of ‘professionalisation’. It is a matter of debate if the use of the term is helpful for the understanding of the evolution of diplomacy as it introduces a teleological approach and encourages historians to judge early modern diplomacy against the standards of a later system of international relations. However, even applying the concepts of ‘profession’ and ‘professionalisation’, several historians conducted nuanced studies of the education and life experience of early modern diplomats which highlight, on the one hand, the absence of targeted training among high-ranking diplomats and, on the other, the role of self-fashioning and lifelong political careers in carrying out diplomatic missions.¹⁵¹

The rise of European Francophonie¹⁵² and the role of French as a diplomatic *lingua franca* seem to have led to the decreased importance of other languages in everyday diplomatic communication. Of course, this situation was by no means uniform across Europe, and the authors in this volume provide ample information about the differences in linguistic situations among European diplomacies. However, as Petrova has recently remarked, when Russian aristocrats were appointed to high diplomatic positions in the eighteenth century, the criterion of language proficiency was almost never mentioned.¹⁵³ Name, title, style¹⁵⁴ and the ability to socialise in court societies were obviously more important. If this was the case, it is certainly because, by the middle of the eighteenth century, there was an assumption that, for high-ranking diplomats, there was no vital need to learn any specific European language other than French. Proficiency in this language was so natural in this milieu that mentioning it was unnecessary.

This does not mean that other vernacular languages were less needed and less frequently used in diplomacy. In many cases, diplomats sent documents as attachments in languages other than French. Additionally, some countries, such as Spain, continued using their language even in routine diplomatic correspondence well into the eighteenth century, and in some cases, until the very end of the early modern period. However, even in the case of Spanish diplomats, oral interactions with other European diplomats seem to have occurred mostly in French, at least starting in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In Russian diplomacy, after Peter the Great, this evolution of language practices determined a rather clear division between the highest diplomatic personnel and the middle or low diplomatic personnel. Linguistic requirements were mostly applied to the latter category, whose training was discussed throughout the eighteenth century and became the object of a series of initiatives.¹⁵⁵

It is probably not a coincidence that the spread of French in all types of communication in Russian diplomacy (external and internal) occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the use of French as a societal language among the Russian nobility also increased. In other words, the development of Russian societal Francophonie was probably instrumental in the spread of French within

Russian diplomacy. This observation underlines the singularity of the evolution of language practices in Russian diplomacy compared with other European diplomacies, such as those of Prussia and Spain.

European Diplomats in the Global World: Languages in Communications with Non-Europeans

At the end of this introduction, one final issue must be addressed. This volume focuses primarily on the European theatre of diplomacy and linguistic interactions within it. This is explained not only by the expertise of the historians who contributed to this book but also by the weight of intra-European foreign relations in the overall diplomatic interactions of European countries. Although diplomatic encounters and cultures in non-European societies and realms are deliberately left aside, they represent no less an interesting object of study. A mixture of multilingualism and reliance on one or more *lingua francas* was not unique to early modern Europe. For example, the elites and bureaucrats of both the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran shared proficiency in both Turkish and Persian. However, in official diplomatic correspondence, the Ottomans mostly wrote to their counterparts in Turkish, and the Safavids deliberately used Persian. At the same time, when dealing with their eastern neighbours, the Ottoman chancellorists typically used a standardised Arabo-Persian diplomatic vocabulary and a much more Persianate variant of Turkish than the one used for correspondence with European monarchs.¹⁵⁶

The Age of Exploration and the first wave of European colonialism brought Europeans into contact with a multitude of different political actors and cultures. New systems of communication had to be established and developed. The process of adaptation was mutual, and global early modern diplomatic encounters can be described as essentially intercultural.¹⁵⁷ Departing from the Eurocentric perspective of diplomatic history, recent scholarship has embraced non-European settings, a turn which has had a revitalising effect on research. Using the approach of NDH, with its focus on individual actors in diplomatic interactions and on rituals and symbols of diplomatic communication, researchers began examining the global history of diplomacy from new angles.¹⁵⁸ Over the last fifteen years, the entangled relations between European trade companies, other representatives of colonial administration and the realms of Africa and Asia have become the subject of a series of comprehensive studies.¹⁵⁹

Recent research has also addressed the linguistic aspect of these intercultural encounters, albeit rather marginally. In interactions with non-European rulers, sheer practical necessity and the availability of personnel probably influenced the question of language choice more than in intra-European relations. Agents skilled in local languages were rare; as a result, the role of intermediaries who could act as interpreters grew. As briefly discussed above, such intermediaries could be former prisoners, slaves, survivors of shipwrecks, local merchants and missionaries. Both European and non-European parties involved in diplomatic encounters sought and used their language skills. The most famous example of linguistic mediation is probably the story of Jesuits in Manchu China in the last third of the seventeenth

century. They used Latin as the intermediary language while helping Chinese authorities to communicate with several Russian embassies, including the negotiations which led to the conclusion of the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689.¹⁶⁰ In the eighteenth century, Jesuits were even used by Qing emperors as Latin teachers for future Manchu and Chinese diplomatic interpreters.¹⁶¹ The imperial court in Beijing and local warlords used the services of European interpreters and intermediaries. For example, Zheng Chenggong appointed an Italian Dominican monk as his official emissary to Spanish Manila in 1662.¹⁶² Joby's contribution to this volume offers another study of intercultural diplomatic encounters in South-Eastern Asia, focusing on the linguistic challenges and practices of the Dutch East India Company in Taiwan between 1624 and 1662. As he demonstrates, Europeans had to adapt to the linguistic and cultural settings they encountered; communicate in a variety of languages, including Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Sinitic and Austronesian languages; and even resort to non-verbal techniques when no other methods worked.

A well-studied case of a contact zone between different diplomatic cultures is the story of European-Ottoman relations. Natalie E. Rothman has indisputably shown the importance of intermediary agents and trans-imperial subjects in the intercultural communication of the early modern Mediterranean.¹⁶³ Dragomans, with their excellent command of both European and Oriental languages, were key figures in diplomatic encounters in the region. However, an imbalance in the research on the topic is clear. While numerous studies exist on European embassies in Istanbul and their interactions with dragomans,¹⁶⁴ Ottoman diplomatic missions to the courts of European monarchs and their engagement with European language practices have received less attention. Following the trend of some recent publications,¹⁶⁵ Fliter's article explores how Ottomans changed their strategies in the second half of the eighteenth century, adopting the European system of permanent embassies and introducing new forms of language practices in both external and internal diplomatic communication.

The question of language preferences in the diplomatic cultures of the Americas in the early modern era is complicated by the fact that the European colonial conquest destroyed the significant political entities in the region as early as the first half of the sixteenth century. The research has primarily focused on conquerors' need for interpreters, who were usually recruited or directly kidnapped from the local population.¹⁶⁶ By the end of the period explored in this volume, the USA emerged as a new, independent political actor on the continent. Although it is certainly debatable whether the USA truly exemplifies a non-European diplomatic culture, the article by Welch and Singerton demonstrates that American diplomats were perceived as newcomers in early modern Europe, not least because of their unusual adherence to the use of English in their communications.

The study of the impact of language on diplomatic cultures and practices in the early modern world remains a relatively young field of research. Contributions to this volume do not claim to encompass all varieties of linguistic encounters and communications in early modern diplomacies. Instead, they aim at outlining major trends in language use by early modern diplomats, mainly in the European context, through a series of case studies and overviews of regional diplomatic

traditions. The editors hope that this collection of essays will further stimulate interest in language practices in diplomacy and in the social history of languages in general.

Notes

- 1 Burke, "Introduction", 18. Another historiographic trend which attracted the attention of historians to language is the history of concepts, in its German and British versions, focused particularly on the study of political thought. Over the last sixty years, it has become a well-developed field of research. Some of the important works in this field are: Pockock, *Politics, Language, and Time* (1960); Brunner, Conze & Koselleck (Hrsg.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972–1997); Koselleck (Hrsg.), *Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte* (1979).
- 2 Del Valle, "Language, Politics and History", 4.
- 3 On the pioneering work of Brunot see: Argent, Rjéoutski & Offord, "European Francophonie and a Framework for its Study", 15–17.
- 4 Guespin & Marcellesi, "Pour la glottopolitique", 26; Milroy, *Linguistic Variation and Change*, 169, insists that "it is speakers, not languages that innovate", quoted after Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 12.
- 5 Del Valle, "Language, Politics and History", 10.
- 6 Del Valle, "Language, Politics and History", 11.
- 7 Gallagher & Hossein, "Languages of History, History of Languages", 2–3, 5.
- 8 Gallagher & Hossein, "Languages of History, History of Languages", 5.
- 9 On the interest of Marc Bloch in the application of methods used in linguistics to historical research, see: Walker, "A Note on Historical Linguistics and Marc Bloch's Comparative Method".
- 10 On the possibility to apply the modern concept of 'profession' to early modern diplomacy, particularly in the Russian context, see: Rjéoutski, "Languages and Professions in Eighteenth-century Russia".
- 11 See the webpage of the Decrypt project: <https://de-crypt.org/> (accessed 4 May 2024).
- 12 Lehmkuhl, "Diplomatiegeschichte als internationale Kulturgeschichte".
- 13 Hennings & Sowerby (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World*; Sowerby, "Early Modern Diplomatic History"; Thiessen, "Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen/Neue Diplomatiegeschichte"; Thiessen, "Diplomatie vom type ancien".
- 14 Scott, "Diplomatic Culture in Old Regime Europe"; Hennings & Sowerby (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World*, 2.
- 15 Alloul & Auwers, "What is (New in) New Diplomatic History?", 118.
- 16 Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV*.
- 17 Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*; Crouzet, *Le haut cœur de Catherine de Médicis*; McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat*.
- 18 Ulbert & Le Bouëdec (dir.), *La fonction consulaire à l'époque moderne*; Marzagalli, Ghazali & Windler, *Les consuls en Méditerranée*; Bartolomei et al. (eds.), *De l'utilité commerciale des consuls*.
- 19 Frigo & Watkins, "Prudence and Experience"; Thiessen, "Diplomatie vom type ancien".
- 20 Windler, "Diplomatic History as a Field for Cultural Analysis".
- 21 Krischer, "Souveränität als sozialer Status"; Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Emperor's Old Clothes*; Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe*.
- 22 Martin, "Gifts for the Bride"; Auwers, "The Gift of Rubens".
- 23 Cutler, "Significant Gifts"; Watkins, "Towards a New Diplomatic History"; see the latter's criticism of Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*.

- 24 URL: <https://earlymoderndiplomacyevents.wordpress.com/>; <https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/diplomacy-in-early-modern-period-1400-1800#tab-818651> (accessed 3 May 2024).
- 25 URL: <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FK005049%2F1#tabOverview> (accessed 3 May 2024).
- 26 URL: <https://www.su.se/english/research/research-groups/global-diplomacy-network?open-collapse-boxes=research-group-members,research-group-publications,research-group-teaser-list> (accessed 3 May 2024).
- 27 Dickmann, *Der Westfälische Frieden*, 214–215; Ostrower, *Language, Law, and Diplomacy*.
- 28 Bély, “L’usage diplomatique de la langue française, instrument de la puissance?”; Braun, “Frédéric-Charles Moser et les langues de la diplomatie européenne”; Rjéoutski & Offord, “French in Russian diplomacy”; Rjéoutski, Offord & Argent, “French as a Diplomatic and Official Language in Imperial Russia”.
- 29 For example, Brunot, “Les débuts du français dans la diplomatie”, 701–711, focused primarily on the use of languages at the Peace Congress of Westphalia.
- 30 “Übersetzungsleistungen von Diplomatie und Medien im Vormodernen Friedensprozess. Europa 1450–1789/1815”; Duchhardt & Espenhorst (Hrsg.), *Frieden übersetzen in der Vormoderne*; Espenhorst (Hrsg.), *Frieden durch Sprache?*; Burkhardt, Jankrift & Weber (Hrsg.), *Sprache. Macht. Frieden*.
- 31 Waugh & Maier, *Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Modern Russia*.
- 32 Braun, “Une tour de Babel?”; Braun, *La connaissance du Saint-Empire en France*; Braun, “Les problèmes de communication aux congrès internationaux”, etc.
- 33 Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, ch. III. This chapter also deals with the use of languages at the audiences given to Hanseatic envoys at the Spanish court in the first part of the seventeenth century; Braun et al. (eds.), *Langues et diplomaties*; Rjéoutski et al. (eds.), *Translation in Early Modern Diplomacy*.
- 34 E.g.: Braun, “Frédéric-Charles Moser et les langues de la diplomatie européenne (1648–1750)”; Braun, “La formation des diplomates à l’‘époque moderne’”; Kugeler, “*Le parfait Ambassadeur*”; Durst, “Diplomatische Sprachpraxis und Übersetzungskultur in der Frühen Neuzeit”; Rjéoutski, “Languages and Professions in Eighteenth-century Russia”; Rjéoutski, “Mezhdru Rossiei i Zapadnoi Evropoi”; Schmidt-Rösler, “Von »Viel-Züglern« und vom »fremden Reden-Kwäckern«”; Shikulo, “Ucheniki inostrannykh iazykov i dvoriane posol’sstva”.
- 35 One of these conferences under the title “Languages and Diplomacies from the Middle Ages to the Present Day” was organised by Guido Braun, Camille Desenclos and Renaud Meltz at the University of Upper Alsace in December 2022. Another workshop organised by Vladislav Rjéoutski and Guido Braun in December 2023 at the German Historical Institute in Paris explored diplomatic translation in the early modern world.
- 36 Video recordings of the papers presented at this conference can be found at: <https://youtu.be/ZpCsV1lw3q8?si=InTmESxBOef0G25P>; <https://youtu.be/jrtEdC5sR5I?si=IiE2jSRwNRCzBsOx> (accessed 3 May 2024).
- 37 Here and below is our translation unless stated otherwise. Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 15. On the distinction of the concepts linguistic policy, language planning, and glottopolitics, see Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 5, 12–13, 15.
- 38 Guespin and Marcellesi speak of “management of language practices” or “glottopolitical dirigisme”; Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 17–18 (“gestion des pratiques linguistiques”, “dirigisme glottopolitique”). See some case studies of early modern instances of linguistic foreign policies in Sanchez-Summerer & Frijhoff (eds.), *Linguistic and Cultural Foreign Policies of European States*.
- 39 Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 12.
- 40 Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 348.
- 41 These are the usual questions explored in cultural histories of languages such as: Del Valle (ed.), *A Political History of Spanish*; Offord et al. (eds.), *French and Russian in*

- Imperial Russia*, particularly vol. 2; Picchio & Goldblatt (eds.), *Aspects of the Slavic Language Question*; Rindler Schjerve (ed.), *Diglossia and Power*.
- 42 On this ukaze dated 22 December 1787 and on the context of its adoption see Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 294–295. On the relationship between language and nation in Europe before the nineteenth century, see, for example: Guion, “Langues et nations XIIIe—XIIIe siècles”.
 - 43 See Rjéoutski, “Mezhdu Rossiei i Zapadnoi Evropoi”, 1227.
 - 44 Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 15.
 - 45 Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 24.
 - 46 Terms used by Guespin and Marcellesi: Guespin & Marcellesi, “Pour la glottopolitique”, 23–24 (“propagateurs de normes”, “couches culturellement hégémoniques”).
 - 47 See the definition of the ecology of language given by Einar Haugen in: Haugen, “The Ecology of Language”, 19. On the genesis of this trend and its reception see: Lechevrel, “L’écologie du langage d’Einar Haugen”.
 - 48 Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, “Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism”, 42.
 - 49 See for example: Kahane, “A Typology of the Prestige Language”. The concept of “prestige language” and its application to the French language in early modern Europe is discussed in: Argent, Rjéoutski & Offord, “European Francophonie and a Framework for its Study”, 27–31.
 - 50 The case in point being Russian high nobility, see: Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 88, 273, 572. See also Kuhfuß, *Eine Kulturgeschichte des Französischunterrichts in der frühen Neuzeit*.
 - 51 See numerous examples of the use of foreign tongues as high languages in early modern Europe in: Burke, “Diglossia in Early Modern Europe”, 35–42.
 - 52 Ferguson (“Diglossia”) referred to two varieties of the same language, while Fishman (“Bilingualism With and Without Diglossia”) extended the distinction between High and Low varieties to two different languages.
 - 53 For an analysis of case studies of the parallel use of more than one language in internal diplomatic correspondence, see for example: Holm & Rjéoutski, “I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me for Writing in a Foreign Language”.
 - 54 Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, “Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism”, 38.
 - 55 Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, ch. III.
 - 56 Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, “Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism”, 50.
 - 57 On the Swedish case, cf. Holm’s article in this volume. See also: Holm & Rjéoutski, “I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me for Writing in a Foreign Language”.
 - 58 Holm & Rjéoutski, “I Ask Your Excellency most Humbly to Pardon Me for Writing in a Foreign Language”.
 - 59 Burke, “Diglossia in Early Modern Europe”, 45–46. On the view of French as a language of modernity, see: Mignon, “French in Ottoman Turkey”. It is important to underscore that the value of a language is by no means something intrinsic to it, but depends on the social, cultural, and professional position of each actor. It is often difficult to apprehend not only because it is not easy to analyse what the actors tell about their language practice (such statements are often biased), but because, as mentioned above, in the majority of cases, we lack metalinguistic commentary.
 - 60 Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 11.
 - 61 See for example, Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 148–154.
 - 62 For example, we find the written versions of the speeches of Charles Whitworth (1675–1725), 1st Baron Whitworth, at the Russian court in 1710 (and also indications of the languages used by the Russian side for oral responses to Whitworth’s speech); of the Danish ambassador Grundt, also at the Russian court, in 1710; of the French envoy at the Russian court, Jacques de Campredon in 1721, etc. Rjéoutski, Offord & Argent, “French as a Diplomatic and Official Language in Imperial Russia”, 444–445.
 - 63 See on professional languages: Hoffmann, *Kommunikationsmittel Fachsprache*.
 - 64 Yeught, “Charting the Diachronic Dimension of Specialized Languages”, 3–4.

- 65 See, for example, a recent study of the military language and terminology in the eighteenth-century Russian empire: Sdvizhkov, "Grammatika boya, iazyk batarei".
- 66 See a recent exploration of the case of an outstanding Russian diplomat of the time, Prince Boris Ivanovich Kurakin, known for his "macaronic" language: Zitser, "Il parlait assez bien français et plusieurs langues"; also see: Voloskova, *Diplomaticheskaja leksika nachala XVIII veka*; Voloskova, "Inoiazychnye slova".
- 67 On the role of translation in the genesis of national terminologies in early modern Russia, see Polskoi & Rjéoutski, "Perevod i razvitie politicheskogo iazyka v Rossii XVIII veka", 7–47. On borrowed terminology in the Russian diplomatic language in the middle of the eighteenth century, see Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 287–290.
- 68 On the sources usually used by historical sociolinguists and the challenges faced by historical sociolinguistics, see Hernandez-Campoy & Shilling, "The Application of the Qualitative Paradigm"; on language standardisation in relation to language learning, see McColl Millar, "Social History and the Sociology of Language", section 3.4.
- 69 Numerous and often detailed remarks on language proficiency among seventeenth-century Hanseatic diplomats can be found in: Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, ch. III.
- 70 For further remarks on language proficiency of early modern diplomats as a research problem, see in section III of this introduction.
- 71 Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics*; Burke & Porter (eds.), *The Social History of Language*; Burke & Porter (eds.), *Language, Self, and Society*; Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*.
- 72 Porter, "Introduction", 3; see a discussion of these approaches in: Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 60–72.
- 73 Walker, "A Note on Historical Linguistics and Marc Bloch's Comparative Method", 164.
- 74 Espagne, "Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle"; Paulmann, "Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer"; Werner & Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison".
- 75 E.g., Couto & Péquignot (dir.), *Les Langues de la négociation*.
- 76 On the methodological challenges of applying quantitative methods to historical sociolinguistics, see: Hernandez-Campoy & Shilling, "The Application of the Quantitative Paradigm".
- 77 On the concept of pattern in linguistics, see: Busse & Moehlig-Falke (eds.), *Patterns in Language and Linguistics*.
- 78 In Brunot's works ("Les débuts du français dans la diplomatie"), the idea of a two-stage process, Latin being replaced by French in diplomacy, is more implied than explicitly stated; it is expressed more clearly by other authors writing in the first half of the twentieth century, for example: Dauzat, "Le Français langue diplomatique de l'Europe", particularly 330–331; and Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, I, 58–60. This narrative is again briefly repeated in Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 100–102.
- 79 Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 52–60.
- 80 Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*.
- 81 On the circumstances surrounding the conclusion of this treaty, see Brunot, "Les débuts du français dans la diplomatie", 716–718.
- 82 Brunot, "Les débuts du français dans la diplomatie", 719; Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 196.
- 83 That Latin was hardly ever used in oral communication was noted by an eighteenth-century observer of the use of languages in diplomacy, Friedrich Karl von Moser, cf. Schmidt-Rösler, "Von »Viel-Züglern« und vom »fremden Reden-Kwäckern«", 224. On the difficulty of using Latin in oral interactions in the early modern period, see Brunot, "Les débuts du français dans la diplomatie", 700–701.
- 84 See Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 142–144, 150–151, 153, etc.

- 85 Siouffi, "De l'« universalité » européenne du français", 13–14.
- 86 On language consciousness in early modern European societies, see Guion, "Langues et nations".
- 87 Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 17.
- 88 Bloemendal, "Introduction: Bilingualism, Multilingualism and the Formation of Europe", 2.
- 89 Bloemendal, "Introduction: Bilingualism, Multilingualism and the Formation of Europe", 5, 7, 11.
- 90 Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues", 68–69; Schnettger, "Auf dem Weg in die Bedeutungslosigkeit?", 25–60.
- 91 Just one example: The National Archives (TNA), SP 94/31 (1624).
- 92 Braun, "Une tour de Babel?"; Braun, "Fremdsprachen als Fremderfahrung".
- 93 On competition between French and vernacular languages in diplomacy, see below.
- 94 Khisamova, *Tatarskii iazyk*, 74, 90–91; Liubaia, "Osobennosti organizatsii"; Waugh & Maier, *Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Modern Russia*, 138–145; Kochegarov, "I have no one who can translate and understand these letters".
- 95 Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen*.
- 96 Dursteler, "Language and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean"; Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues: Language and Communication in the Early Modern Mediterranean".
- 97 Vatin, "L'emploi du grec comme langue diplomatique", 46–47.
- 98 On dragomans and their role as interpreters and cultural mediators see: De Groot, "Die Dragomane 1700–1869"; Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans"; Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*.
- 99 Tercero Casado, "*Esto me suena a tudesco*", 121–123. On other cases of the use of Italian as a diplomatic *lingua franca* in the Holy Roman Empire, see González Cuerva, "Saben la lengua de España, mas saben el lenguaje de palacio", 92.
- 100 Erusalimskii, "Tolmachi i perevodchiki".
- 101 Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 102.
- 102 Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues", 60–62; Cziráki, "Language Students and Interpreters", 34.
- 103 Vogel, "Istanbul as a Hub of Early Modern European Diplomacy"; Lucchetta, "La scuola dei „giovani di lingua“ veneti"; Hitzel, "Les Jeunes de langues de Pera-lès-Constantinople".
- 104 Cziráki, "Language Students and Interpreters".
- 105 On the Russian case, cf.: Shikulo, "Ucheniki inostrannykh iazykov i dvoriane posol'stva"; Bazarova, "The Languages of Communication and Negotiation". On the Spanish case, cf.: Cáceres-Würsig, "The jeunes de langues in the eighteenth century"; Cáceres-Würsig, "Im Niemandsland: Dragomane und „jóvenes de lenguas"". On the French case, cf.: Hitzel, "Les Jeunes de langues de Pera-lès-Constantinople". On the Polish case, cf.: Majda, "L'Ecole polonaise des langues orientales". Britain only began successfully training its own "*giovani di lingua*" in the early nineteenth century; cf. Berridge, "Dragomans and Oriental Secretaries".
- 106 Woodhead, "Ottoman Languages".
- 107 The biggest novelty was the establishment of the first permanent embassies at the European courts from 1793 onwards. Before that, the negotiations with European powers occurred mostly in Istanbul or by dispatching occasional ambassadors, see Kürkçüoğlu, "The Adoption and Use of Permanent Diplomacy".
- 108 González Cuerva, "Saben la lengua de España, mas saben el lenguaje de palacio", 97–98.
- 109 Glück, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache in Europa*.
- 110 About the political and economic history of the Baltic region in the early modern era see: Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period*.

- 111 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 163–165.
- 112 Larina, “Iazyki diplomatii na Alandskom kongresse”.
- 113 Siouffi, “De l’« universalité » européenne du français”, 14–15.
- 114 Östman, “French in Sweden”; Östman & Östman, *Au champ d’Apollon*.
- 115 Beliakov, “Translating Diplomacy”.
- 116 Offord *et al.*, *The French Language in Russia*.
- 117 Rjéoutski & Offord, “French in Russian Diplomacy”.
- 118 On the use of languages during court audiences given to the diplomats of the Hanseatic League, see Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 149–154.
- 119 Holm & Rjéoutski, “I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me”.
- 120 Khimina, *Gosudarstvennost’ Rossii*, 241. We are grateful to Maria A. Petrova for this information.
- 121 On the use of French among Russian nobles, see: Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*. For more detail on this process, see: Rjéoutski, “Languages and Professions in Eighteenth-century Russia”.
- 122 Holm & Rjéoutski, “I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me”.
- 123 About the term “secret diplomacy” in reference to the early modern period, see Rous, *Geheimdiplomatie in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 15–35.
- 124 Rous, “Informationssicherheit in der diplomatischen Korrespondenz”, 19.
- 125 Picard, *Das Gesandtschaftswesen Ostmitteleuropas in der Frühen Neuzeit*; Geier, *Russische Kulturgeschichte in diplomatischen Reiseberichten*, 35–51.
- 126 On Huygens’ multilingualism, cf.: Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens, 1596–1687*.
- 127 Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 143, 150–153, 155, etc.
- 128 Schmidt-Rösler, “Von »Viel-Züglern« und vom »fremden Reden-Kwäckern«”, 216.
- 129 Horbec & Matasović, “Latein als ‘national’, Deutsch als kosmopolitisch?”; Horbec, Matasović, “Voices in a country divided: Linguistic choices in early modern Croatia”. On differences in the role of Latin in various European countries, also see: Bloemendal (ed.), *Bilingual Europe*.
- 130 Żołędz-Strzelczyk, *Peregrinatio academica*.
- 131 Koyama, “Latin as a Medium of Cultural Communication in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”, 7–9.
- 132 Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 142, etc.
- 133 On language learning in Jesuit colleges during this period, see: Caravolas, *Histoire de la didactique des langues*, ch. XIX.
- 134 Brockliss, *French Higher Education*, 25–27, 111. The process was rather slow and its pace differed considerably depending on the religious order and on confession: The Oratorians were more inclined to replace Latin with French than the Jesuits, and Protestants were more willing to teach to read and write in French than Catholics. See: Waquet, *Le latin ou l’empire du signe*, 20–23. On the resistance to the introduction of vernaculars into university teaching, also see: Waquet, “Latin et vernaculaires dans l’Université du XVIIIe siècle”.
- 135 Bruschi, “Learning Vernaculars, Learning in Vernaculars”, 20–21.
- 136 Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, 71–79.
- 137 See Rjéoutski, “Latin in the Education of Nobility in Russia”, 169–189.
- 138 See the introduction by Guido Braun in Braun (Hrsg.), *Diplomatische Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit*, XIX–XX.
- 139 Berelowitch & Baudin, “Aristokraty i lekari”.
- 140 Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 77; Schindling, *Bildung und Wissenschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*, 30–44.
- 141 In the English research tradition, the term “Grand Tour” is often preferred to designate this kind of aristocratic educational trip. On the phenomenon see: Babel & Paravicini (Hrsg.), *Grand Tour*; Leibetseder, *Die Kavalierstour*; Leibetseder, “Grand Tour im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit”; Wilton *et al.* (eds.), *Grand Tour*.

- 142 Östman, "French in Sweden"; Östman & Östman, *Au champ d'Apollon*; also see: Östman, *Glanures*.
- 143 Östman, "Vers et prose d'expression française produits en Suède". 71–72.
- 144 See for example: Haar, *The Golden Mean of Languages*; Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England*.
- 145 On learning French in eighteenth-century Russia, see: Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, ch. 2. On the stays abroad of would-be Russian diplomats in the reign of Peter I, see: Altbauer, "The Diplomats of Peter the Great". On language skills among Russian diplomats, see: Rjéoutski, "Languages and Professions in Eighteenth-century Russia". On Russian eighteenth-century diplomacy in general, particularly its organisation, see: Joukovskaïa, *Le service diplomatique russe*.
- 146 Matzke, *Gesandtschaftswesen und diplomatischer Dienst Sachsens*, 129–177. Indicated by Maria A. Petrova, "Vladienie inostrannymi yazykami".
- 147 Larina, "Iazyki diplomatii na Alandskom kongresse".
- 148 For secondary literature references concerning the Ottoman dragomans see footnote 98, on the organisation of Ottoman diplomacy in the early modern period see Ari, "Early Ottoman Diplomacy".
- 149 On West Europeans as translators at the Muscovite Ambassadorial chancellery see: Angermann, "Deutsche Übersetzer und Dolmetscher im vorpetrinischen Russland"; Beliaikov, *Sluzhashchie Posol'skogo prikaza*, 93–165; Liseitsev & Shamin (eds.), *Perevodchiki i perevody v Rossii*; Waugh & Maier, *Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Modern Russia*, 175–284.
- 150 One famous example of such failed communication is the case of Seyyid Ali Efendi, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, who was completely ignorant of any French invasion plans concerning Egypt in 1798 and learnt about Napoleon's expedition from the government in Istanbul, see Kürkcüoğlu, "The Adoption and Use of Permanent Diplomacy", 136.
- 151 See for example, Lingnau, "Experience instead of Professionalism"; May, "Négociier entre diplomates", and, more generally, Félicité (dir.), *L'Identité du diplomate*. On the concept of 'professionalisation' and its application to the early modern training of diplomatic personnel, see also Rjéoutski, "Languages and Professions in Eighteenth-century Russia", 289–293.
- 152 This expression is related to the widespread use of the French language in Europe from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, primarily by social elites. This phenomenon can be referred to as "European Francophonie" or "historical Francophonie" to distinguish it from modern Francophonie, which primarily implies cultural and political interaction between France and its former colonies. On this distinction, see: Argent, Rjéoutski & Offord, "European Francophonie and a Framework for Its Study", 4–10. On European Francophonie in general, see: Rjéoutski, Argent & Offord (eds.), *European Francophonie*.
- 153 Petrova, "Vladienie inostrannymi iazykami".
- 154 McDonald, "Striving After Style".
- 155 Some of them are discussed in a recent article by Shikulo, "Ucheniki inostrannykh iazykov i dvoriane posol'stva". On training in Western European diplomacies, see Kugeler, *"Le parfait Ambassadeur"*, part IV; Braun, "La formation des diplomates à l'époque moderne".
- 156 Güngörürler, *The Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran*, 22–23.
- 157 About the definition of 'intercultural diplomacy' in the early modern era see: Krischer & von Thiessen, "Diplomacy in a Global Early Modernity".
- 158 On different actors and their networks in the global history of early modern diplomacy see: Thiessen & Windler (Hrsg.), *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen*; and contributions to two special issues of JEMH: Krstić & van Gelder (eds.), "Cross-confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries"; Tremml-Werner & Goetze (eds.), "A Multitude of Actors in Early Modern Diplomacy". On rituals and symbols of global early mod-

- ern diplomacy see: Burschel (Hrsg.), *Die Audienz: ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit*; Biedermann, Gerritson & Riello (eds.), *Global Gifts*.
- 159 Brauner, *Kompanien, Könige und 'caboceers'*; Wills (ed.), *China and maritime Europe*; Clulow & Mostert (eds.), *The Dutch and English East India Companies*; Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires*.
- 160 Sebes, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk*. Interestingly, from the Russian side, negotiations in Latin were also conducted by foreigners. In 1676, the Moldavian scholar Nikolae Milescu (Spatharu) handled such communications, and in 1689, Jan (Andrei) Belobotski, a Polish-born interpreter in Russian service, took on this role. See: Tremml-Werner & Hellman, "Merely 'Ad hoc' Diplomacy?", 66–68.
- 161 Witek, "Catholic Missions and the Expansion of Christianity", 170.
- 162 Busquets, "Three Manila-Fujian Diplomatic Encounters".
- 163 Rothman, *Brokering empire*; Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*.
- 164 Hoenkamp-Mazgon, *Palais de Hollande in Istanbul*; Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*; Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations*.
- 165 Grenet, "Muslim Missions to Early Modern France"; Do Paço, "Trans-imperial Familiarity".
- 166 Roland, *Interpreters as Diplomats*, 41–82; Valdeón, *Translation and the Spanish Empire in the Americas*, 35–69.

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Part II

German-Speaking States and the Growing Role of French in European Diplomacy



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2 German and French in the Diplomacy of the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 1700–1730

Gleb Kazakov

The Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin at the start of the eighteenth century

The history of early modern diplomacy usually revolves around the decisions and negotiations of the ‘big players’ of the diplomatic arena—powers such as France, England, Spain, and the Habsburg monarchy. However, one should not forget that many less powerful states were also involved in the process of diplomacy and had a significant influence on it: they participated in diplomatic conferences, formed and joined international alliances, looked for advantageous deals, and influenced the overall balance of power. This was particularly true for the numerous duchies of the Holy Roman Empire, whose geopolitical location in the middle of Europe often made them objects of interest for more powerful neighbours.

Although nominally ruled by a single emperor (from the mid-fifteenth century, a member of the Habsburg family), the Holy Roman Empire was, at the dawn of the eighteenth century, a complex political entity composed of several hundred states, each with territorial sovereignty. In the sphere of diplomacy, these states were allowed to conduct their own foreign policy and maintain relations with foreign powers, provided they did not infringe upon the interests of the emperor. One such imperial state was the Duchy of Mecklenburg, situated in the northeastern corner of the Empire on the southern shores of the Baltic Sea.

Like many German territories, Mecklenburg was partitioned and re-partitioned several times among different members of the ruling dynasty. In 1621, it was divided into the two duchies of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Mecklenburg-Güstrow. With the extinction of the Güstrow line in 1695, the territory of Mecklenburg was re-divided once again within the ruling family according to the treaty of Hamburg of 1701, which established the duchies of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Mecklenburg-Schwerin.¹ The latter remained the larger and more powerful of the two and, at the turn of the century, was ruled by Duke Frederick William I.

Having suffered significant damage during the Thirty Years War,² the duchy had not fully recovered by the end of the seventeenth century and was hardly a wealthy state. The duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was not able to finance and maintain a significant military force and had to rely on diplomacy to preserve the integrity of his territory. Balancing between the interests of the mighty neighbouring states—Denmark, Sweden, Prussia, and the Electorate of Hanover—was crucial to its survival.

As the Great Northern War between Sweden and the alliance of Denmark, Poland-Saxony and Russia began in the Baltic in 1700, Frederick William I had to choose whom to side with. Negotiations with Denmark and Prussia, conducted in 1706, stalled and failed to produce a meaningful alliance. A diplomatic mission to the war camp of the Swedish king Charles XII in Saxony could not win his favour either,³ and the vulnerable duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin seemed to be viewed merely as a prize for whoever would win the war.

As early as 1707, some ministers of Frederick William I suggested seeking aid from the Russian tsar, although Sweden was seen as a clear favourite in the conflict at the time. However, after the defeat of the Swedish army at the battle of Poltava in 1709, the tables were turned. From that point onward, the Swedes were on the defensive, and the allied forces of Russia, Denmark, and Saxony advanced into Swedish-controlled northern Germany. Between 1711 and 1717, the territory of Mecklenburg-Schwerin became the primary theatre of war, with coalition forces using the duchy as a base for operations against the Swedish forces. In 1715, Prussia and Hanover entered the war on the side of the allies in the hope of territorial gains from a weakened Sweden. The Swedish garrison at Stralsund capitulated at the very end of the same year. The last remaining Swedish fortress in northern Germany, Wismar, had to surrender a year later.

Meanwhile, in 1713, Duke Frederick William I died and was succeeded by his brother Charles Leopold. It was during his reign that the duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin suddenly found itself at the very centre of European politics. Charles Leopold eagerly pursued the once-suggested plan of an alliance with the rising power of Russia under Peter the Great. He saw this partnership not only as a means to partake in the partition of Swedish holdings in northern Germany but also—as he believed—to secure Russian military support in his struggle to enforce absolute authority over the Mecklenburgian nobles.⁴

In April 1716, Charles Leopold married a Russian princess—Ekaterina Ivanovna, daughter of Peter's deceased half-brother Ivan—and signed a treaty of alliance with the Russian tsar.⁵ As part of the agreement, 40,000 Russian troops were stationed in the duchy. This, however, provoked strong protests from other members of the anti-Swedish coalition—Denmark, Prussia, and Hanover—and led to a severe cooling-off in their relations with Russia. The continuous Russian military presence in northern Germany's port cities was perceived as a threat. Under pressure, Peter the Great was forced to withdraw his troops. As for Charles Leopold's hopes of using Russian power to subdue his nobles, they proved to be mere wishful thinking. Peter refused to interfere in Mecklenburg-Schwerin's internal affairs, and in 1717, a *Reichsexekution* (a military intervention, sanctioned by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) was proclaimed against the defiant duke. When Hanoverian troops invaded the duchy in 1719, Charles Leopold fled and remained in exile until 1728, when he was formally deposed in favour of his brother, Christian Ludwig II.⁶

This article adopts a micro-perspective on the history of early modern diplomacy, focusing on the language practices of one particular diplomatic actor—the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin—within the rather short period of the first

quarter of the eighteenth century. This approach provides insight into how the major linguistic tendencies and challenges of the era were perceived and dealt with by a smaller court.

The Diplomatic Personnel of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Their Linguistic Preferences

As the historical overview above demonstrates, the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was deeply involved in Baltic diplomacy. The Baltic Sea region and northern Germany formed a dense network of diplomatic contacts, as all political entities in the area had a strong interest in maintaining relations. However, the ethnic origin of a diplomat was not necessarily tied to his place of employment. Northern powers such as Denmark and Sweden, in particular, were eagerly hiring nobles from German states, as they lacked experienced and well-educated local candidates in the numbers needed.

According to Heiko Droste's estimates, about two-thirds of the Swedish diplomatic corps in the seventeenth century were foreigners, predominantly of German origin.⁷ In Denmark, a great number of nobles from Mecklenburg were employed in the royal service according to a report by the Prussian envoy Friedrich Ernst von Knyphausen from October 1709.⁸ It was not uncommon for members of the same family to serve different sovereigns. For example, in the case of the von Krassow family from Pomerania, Ernst Detlof von Krassow was a Swedish officer who played an active role in the defence of Swedish holdings in Pomerania during the Great Northern War, while his brother Adam Philipp became a major general in Mecklenburg and was sent on several diplomatic missions to Berlin and Hanover in 1711. Changing allegiance—or switching employers, so to speak—although not extremely frequent and definitely not welcomed by the authorities, was a common practice among noblemen, whether diplomats or military officers.

An examination of those who were involved in diplomacy in Mecklenburg-Schwerin in the first quarter of the eighteenth century reveals some eventful careers. Graf (count) Horn, minister and councillor to Duke Frederick William, held an important position as ambassador to the imperial court in Vienna and, before that, had spent over 20 years in Swedish service as a diplomat in Berlin and Vienna.⁹ Another notable figure was Adolf von Petkum, a noble from East Frisia and a key player in Mecklenburgian diplomacy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a man who stood behind the plans of an alliance with the Russian tsar in 1713. Petkum had first served the king of Denmark for nearly two decades before entering the service of Duke Adolf Frederick of Mecklenburg in 1699.¹⁰ An example of reverse mobility can be found in the biography of Andreas Gottlieb von Bernstorff. A graduate of the University of Helmstedt, he was first employed at the court of Duke Christian Ludwig I of Mecklenburg-Schwerin as a personal councillor and translator for the duke's French spouse, Isabella Angelique de Montmorency. After leaving Mecklenburg, Bernstorff eventually became chancellor to the Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. When the duchy merged with the Electorate of Hanover in 1705, Bernstorff rose to the position of first minister and followed his sovereign

to England in 1714 when the Prince-Elector of Hanover became the English king George I.¹¹ It was Bernstorff who oversaw the military intervention in Mecklenburg in 1719, since he, as a native Mecklenburgian noble, strongly opposed the absolutist policy of Duke Charles Leopold.

Since the Hanseatic League established its dominance on the Baltic Sea in the Late Middle Ages, German was considered the *lingua franca* in the region. The importance of the German language is evident in diplomatic relations, and the frequent employment of German-born diplomats at various courts in the region significantly contributed to the dominance of German as the main language of interstate diplomacy. Compared to the rest of Europe, the Baltic was the region where adherence to German in diplomacy was especially strong and consistent. The use of the German language in official documentation was even associated at that time with a sense of national pride. Thus, as late as 1727, the Hamburg journalist and writer Christian Friedrich Weichmann observed that German was the most common language of communication at the courts in Sweden, Denmark, Poland, and Hungary, making it, in his view, no less important in Europe than French.¹²

To assess language preferences in Mecklenburgian diplomacy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, we have to examine diplomatic documentation preserved in the main state archive (Landeshauptarchiv) in Schwerin. This includes correspondence between Mecklenburgian authorities and both their diplomats abroad (internal communication) and foreign ambassadors and ministers (external communication). When considering the diplomacy of smaller early modern states, one should keep in mind that they were significantly weaker financially than their powerful partners. The Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin simply lacked the resources to maintain permanent representatives at the royal courts of all major European powers. As a result, diplomatic missions were either sent abroad when the need arose or stationed only at the courts of the most crucial diplomatic partners. Even such a significant European power as France was deemed too distant; as a result, no Mecklenburgian embassy was sent to France between 1700 and 1730.

For this article, I have examined the correspondence that the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and his ministers conducted with Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, and the Holy Roman Emperor—the four diplomatic actors with whom the duchy maintained the most consistent relations. Relations between Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Russia are discussed in the next section.

Let us begin with internal correspondence—that is, letters sent by Mecklenburgian residents and envoys at foreign courts to the Duke of Mecklenburg or his privy councillor. Most of these letters were composed in German. The only two notable exceptions are the correspondence of Christoff Wilhelm von Sande, envoy to Berlin in 1709, and that of Georg von Habichtsthal, envoy to Copenhagen and Berlin in 1716–1720.

It is difficult to determine why both von Sande and von Habichtsthal chose to use French. Von Sande's correspondence with the duke was conducted exclusively in French,¹³ and even his final mission report, *Rapport de ce qui s'est passé au voyage de Prusse 1709*, was written entirely in French.¹⁴ There is no doubt, however, that he understood German, as his instructions were given in this language.¹⁵

Before his mission to Berlin (from 1703) and after its completion (from 1714), von Sande served as the duke's resident in The Hague, where French was more commonly used among diplomats. This background may have influenced his language choice. It is interesting that, in 1709, the Prussian ministers were suspicious of von Sande and even viewed him as a Francophile.¹⁶ Von Habichtsthal, by contrast, wrote his letters to the duke in German, and his instructions were also in German. However, his correspondence with the duke's first minister, Hermann Christian von Wolfradt, was in French.¹⁷ In all other cases, diplomats reported back in German.

Knowledge of additional languages was a valuable skill. The aforementioned von Sande, while on his mission to Prussia, arranged a meeting with Tsar Peter the Great and, seeking to win his favour, addressed him in Dutch, as Peter's preference for the language was well known. However, this tactic failed to achieve the desired effect—the tsar gave a short answer in Russian, leaving his interpreters to do the rest.¹⁸ Envoy Grundt, who was sent to the camp of Charles XII of Sweden in Saxony in 1706–1707, arranged the translation of some Swedish documents into German.¹⁹

Yet, the most commonly used foreign language in diplomacy was undoubtedly French. The influence of French courtly culture and language grew steadily across Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁰ By the late seventeenth century, French had become the primary language of oral communication at diplomatic conferences, such as the one in Nijmegen, where Latin was already regarded as outdated and even ridiculed.²¹

Northern Germany was not exempt from this process of adopting French culture and language. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, the University of Rostock had incorporated the study of French into its curriculum.²² By the following century, proficiency in French was an important—if not essential—asset for a career in civil service, particularly in diplomacy. Abraham de Wicquefort, the author of one of the most influential theoretical treatises on diplomacy (*L'ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, 1682), viewed French, alongside Latin and Italian, as one of the main languages of diplomatic interaction.²³

However, proficiency in French varied significantly. For example, Adolf von Petkum's French in the draft of Charles Leopold's Russian marriage plan was described as "cumbersome, sometimes grammatically incorrect and often out of style", and it had to be corrected by another diplomat, Baron Johann Dietrich von Eichholtz.²⁴ The latter was the most linguistically skilled Mecklenburgian diplomat of his time; in the 1700s and 1710s, he represented the duke's interests at the courts of Copenhagen and Vienna. Although communication with local authorities was conducted mostly in German, knowledge of French proved valuable for establishing contacts with other diplomats. In Vienna, Eichholtz maintained ties with envoys from the Netherlands and England. Not without a touch of pride, he mentioned in one of his reports regarding the attachments sent: "[here are the documents] which I have given to the English *envoyé* M. de Medous as promemoria after having translated them into French for his convenience".²⁵

French affected the epistolary style of Mecklenburgian diplomats even when they were writing to each other in German. Thus, whereas the duke was always

addressed by his envoys as “*Durchlauchtigster Herzog, Gnädigster Fürst und Herr*”, it was common for envoys and ministers to call each other “*Monsieur et très honoré frère*” or to end a letter with “*votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur*”.²⁶ As mentioned earlier, sometimes an entire correspondence between an envoy and the privy councillor of the duke could be conducted in French, as demonstrated by the case of the exchange of letters between the envoy Georg von Habichtsthal and the councillor Hermann Christian von Wolfradt.

The external correspondence between the court of the duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and foreign authorities was far more bilingual. The envoys from Denmark and Sweden in particular were inclined to write in French; however, this was not a regular rule. The Danish envoy Schack wrote in French both to the duke and to Eichholtz in 1711–1712,²⁷ but his predecessor Johann August Marschall von Biberstein chose German when writing to Duke Frederick William.²⁸ The Swedish minister Friesendorf composed his letter to the duke in French and received an answer in French.²⁹ However, the exchange of letters between the Swedish king Charles XII and both Dukes Frederick William and Charles Leopold was conducted in German.³⁰ The Danish king Frederick IV also wrote to Duke Frederick William in German.³¹ It should also be noted that the texts of the treaties concluded with Denmark (in 1703 and 1715) and Sweden (1695 and 1700), which are preserved today in the Landeshauptarchiv in Schwerin, were all composed in German.

Linguistic Challenges in Relations with Russia

A novelty in the diplomatic relations of the duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the establishment of contact with a new player in the region—the Russian Empire. In contrast to some other German states, such as the duchy of Holstein-Gottorp,³² Mecklenburg-Schwerin did not engage in any diplomatic relations with Russia before 1700. The old Muscovite diplomacy of the seventeenth century did not maintain permanent diplomatic residencies at European courts (with one notable exception: the residency of Vasilii Tiapkin in Warsaw in 1673–1677), and Russian embassies, which were sent to Europe occasionally, did not show any interest in a powerless duchy. But at the turn of the century, Peter the Great initiated a reform of the Russian diplomatic service, which was aimed at training a new corps of Russian diplomats, experienced in European courtly culture and foreign languages; it was also aimed at establishing a network of Russian diplomatic residencies at various European courts involved in the politics around the Great Northern War. As a result, already by 1701 there were six permanent Russian diplomatic missions at work in Europe; by the end of Peter’s reign in 1725, this number had grown to 12.³³

The very first contact was made in February of 1706 in Copenhagen, where Baron von Eichholtz was approached by Andrei Petrovich Izmailov, a Russian ambassador at the Danish royal court, who cautiously inquired about the possibility of a treaty and establishment of trade between Mecklenburg and Russia. It is interesting that, according to the report made by Eichholtz, Izmailov addressed the

Mecklenburgian diplomat in Italian, since it was the language Izmailov was most skilled at:

Yesterday evening I came into contact with the Muscovite Ambassador. When he heard that I had been sent by Your Serene Highness, he immediately addressed me very politely in Italian, and since I replied to him with appropriate respect in the same language, he indicated in the continued discussion that it would be profitable for Your Serene Highness to join an alliance with His Tsarist Majesty.³⁴

Eichholtz was able to communicate in Italian and noted in a later report that Izmailov was employing a "*factotum*", an Italian by birth, as a personal interpreter³⁵ to be able to communicate in the mostly German-speaking environment. The choice of Italian, though rather odd, has an explanation: we know that Izmailov was among the Russian nobles whom Peter the Great sent to study abroad in 1697. He very probably went with the first wave of Russian students to Venice or some other Italian city.³⁶

Although the government of Duke Frederick William remained at first sceptical of the idea of an alliance with Russia, Eichholtz continued his negotiations with Russian diplomats. After his transfer to Vienna, he made acquaintance with a Russian diplomatic representative at the imperial court, Baron Johann Christoph von Urbich, a native German from Thüringen. It is no surprise that their preferred language of communication was German. The same can be said about negotiations with Count Karl Gustav von Löwenwolde—another native German in Russian service—who was sent to the court of Duke Charles Leopold in February 1714 to discuss the particularities of a marriage agreement between the duke and a Russian princess.³⁷

However, the written correspondence with Tsar Peter himself had to rely on the employment of translators. There are several letters from the tsar to Duke Charles Leopold in the Schwerin archive. They are all written in Russian and supplemented with German translations on separate sheets.³⁸ It is not entirely clear whether the translations were prepared in Russia and then sent together with the original Russian letter to the duke or whether they were already produced in Mecklenburg. At least in one case, we can assume that the German translation was prepared in Russia because the paper with the German text contains at the very bottom a small non-translated phrase in Russian.³⁹ In just one case a Russian letter from Peter the Great is supplemented with a Latin translation instead of a German one.⁴⁰

There were, however, people able to translate from Russian in the duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, at least in the 1720s. Thus, a Russian letter written on 11 September 1720 by Ekaterina Ivanovna, the Russian spouse of Duke Charles Leopold, to the wife of the duke's councillor, Hermann Christian von Wolffradt (the wife was at the same time the duke's mistress), contains a German commentary in the margin: "Diesen Brief soll der Obrister Tilly verdolmetzen"—"This letter should be translated by Colonel Tilly".⁴¹ This Colonel Tilly served in the Russian army, where he apparently had an opportunity to learn the language before switching to the employment of Charles Leopold.⁴² There were certainly other

people skilled in both German and Russian in the entourage of Ekaterina Ivanovna, who arrived in Schwerin in 1716.

Letters sent to the Russian tsar and the documents submitted by Mecklenburgian diplomats to their Russian counterparts during negotiations were usually composed in German and then translated into Russian, as the collection from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents demonstrates.⁴³ German was thus the main language of communication in Mecklenburgian–Russian diplomatic relations. Yet by the mid-1710s, a difference in language preferences between two types of Russian diplomats became increasingly evident. Whereas native Germans who became employed in the Russian diplomatic service at the very beginning of the Great Northern War (persons such as the abovementioned Urbich, Löwenwolde, or Albrecht von der Lieth, a resident and envoy of the tsar in Berlin in 1706–1711) naturally used German when dealing with German ministers, a new breed of native Russian diplomats showed a clear preference for French. In 1711 von der Lieth was replaced in Berlin by a new Russian ambassador, Aleksandr Gavrilovich Golovkin, a son of Gavril Ivanovich Golovkin, the head of the Russian ambassadorial chancellery and an influential statesman under Peter the Great. In 1704 at the age of 15, Aleksandr was sent to Europe with his brother to study at Leipzig University, and he also visited Berlin and Paris.⁴⁴ He achieved proficiency in both the German and French languages and became the first Russian nobleman to marry into the European aristocracy—his spouse was Countess Catherine Henriette Dohna.⁴⁵ The Schwerin archive has two letters sent by Golovkin to Duke Charles Leopold; a copy of the third one has been preserved in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents.⁴⁶ All three letters were written in French. The duke's letters to the ambassador were also composed in French. Interestingly, a short letter written by Golovkin's wife, Countess Dohna, to Duke Karl Leopold is also preserved in the archive. She too chose to write in French.⁴⁷

The first Russian diplomat assigned to Mecklenburg-Schwerin as a resident was Mikhail Alekseevich Saltykov, who arrived at Schwerin in September 1717.⁴⁸ The Schwerin archives contain the letters sent by Saltykov to Duke Charles Leopold and to his councillor Hermann Christian von Wolfradt, between 1718 and 1722.⁴⁹ These letters are predominantly written in French, with the exception of four in German, which Saltykov addressed to Wolfradt. However, the handwriting of the German letters does not match Saltykov's own, and two of them contain brief postscripts in French, added by Saltykov himself. It is possible that Saltykov, too, learned French while travelling and studying in Europe, since several groups of young Russian noblemen were sent to Italy, France, England, and the Netherlands under Peter the Great. Like his more famous and successful colleague Aleksandr Golovkin, mentioned above, Saltykov found a European spouse during his diplomatic service abroad. In 1719, he married Barbara Eleonore von Maltzan, from a noble Mecklenburgian family.

While Saltykov served as the tsar's diplomatic representative in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Duke Charles Leopold appointed his own resident to the court in Saint Petersburg in 1718. This role was entrusted to Johann Christoph Dietrich Ostermann, the son of a Lutheran pastor from Bochum and the lesser-known elder

brother of Heinrich Johann Friedrich Ostermann (also known by his Russian name, Andrei Ivanovich), a German-born Russian statesman who rose to prominence under Peter the Great.⁵⁰ Johann Christoph Dietrich, the elder of the brothers, was recruited into Russian service in 1702 by Heinrich von Huysen and became a German language tutor to the three daughters of Peter the Great's step-brother, Ivan, including the future wife of Charles Leopold, Ekaterina Ivanovna.⁵¹

It was as part of her entourage that the elder Ostermann arrived in Mecklenburg-Schwerin in 1716. There, he quickly gained the duke's trust and was appointed his Privy Councillor (*Geheimrat*). While in Mecklenburg, Ostermann may have been among those responsible for translating incoming Russian correspondence, including a letter from Praskovia Saltykova, the mother of Ekaterina and mother-in-law of Charles Leopold.⁵²

In 1718, however, he was sent to Saint Petersburg as a diplomatic resident and a representative of the duke, remaining in Russia until 1741, when a *coup d'état* toppled his younger brother, Andrei Ivanovich Ostermann, from power, forcing him to leave as well. Although officially representing the interests of Charles Leopold, Ostermann ceased receiving payments from the duke from 1721 and was instead granted an allowance by the Russian authorities.⁵³

Ostermann proved to be a diligent reporter. His correspondence with Duke Charles Leopold and his ministers is preserved in five large archival volumes, each containing hundreds of pages.⁵⁴ An examination of the first volume, which covers the period from 1718 to the end of 1721,⁵⁵ reveals that the vast majority of letters are written in German and addressed either to the duke or to his *Geheimrat* (probably Adolf von Petkum). Only 15 of Ostermann's letters are written in French. Although their recipient is not named, we can assume that they were intended for another minister of Charles Leopold, probably Hermann Christian von Wolfradt, since the same archival volume contains several letters in French from Russian diplomats—Mikhail Saltykov and Mikhail Petrovich Bestuzhev-Ryumin—addressed to Wolfradt.⁵⁶

It is not entirely clear why Ostermann chose to write these letters in French. However, whoever received these reports was certainly proficient in both languages, as in five instances, the French *cleartext* (i.e., the non-encrypted text of the letter) is interrupted by a cipher sequence, which is decrypted into German *plaintext* (i.e., the deciphered message written in the same letter over the encoded sequence of digits). In his later reports, from 1723 onwards, Ostermann continued to write predominantly in German. Notably, even as late as the 1740s and 1760s, during the diplomatic missions of Tidemann (1741) and von Lützow (1762–1763) to Saint Petersburg, German remained the primary language of correspondence for these envoys when reporting back to Mecklenburg.⁵⁷

Conclusion

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was primarily involved in the diplomatic affairs of the Baltic region. Being not particularly wealthy, it sought to maintain relations mainly with its neighbours and

the region's most influential states. In the northeastern corner of Europe, German had been considered the *lingua franca* since the Late Middle Ages and was widely understood and spoken not only in the states of the Holy Roman Empire but also among the nobility of Sweden and Denmark. Moreover, the rulers of these Scandinavian kingdoms readily accepted diplomats of German origin into their service.

As a result, German remained the primary language of communication—written or oral—for Mecklenburgian diplomats when engaging in diplomacy at the courts of Berlin, Hanover, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. However, the influence of French was steadily growing. While the kings of Sweden and Denmark continued to compose their letters to the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin in German, the diplomats and ministers of these realms increasingly opted for French in their correspondence.

French was also gaining recognition within the Mecklenburgian diplomatic circles, as seen in the example of the envoy von Sande, who reported entirely in French from his mission to Berlin. Letters—or sections of letters—written in French appear in correspondence between native Germans, particularly when a Mecklenburgian envoy at a foreign court communicated with a minister of the duke in Schwerin. Letters addressed to the duke himself, however, were still traditionally written in German.

Finally, knowledge of French was a valuable asset for an envoy seeking to establish contacts with diplomats from non-German states. This was especially relevant at the courts of powerful monarchs—such as those in Copenhagen, Berlin, and Vienna—which served as key hubs of diplomatic communication in early modern Europe.

Engaging in negotiations with a completely new diplomatic partner—Russia—required Mecklenburgians to adapt to emerging challenges. Multiple languages were used in communication. Eichholtz was approached by Izmailov in Italian, a language in which many Russian noblemen sent to Europe by Peter the Great in the late seventeenth century were most proficient. Foreigners in the Russian diplomatic service—native Germans for the most part, whom Peter eagerly recruited—readily communicated in German. Finally, young Russians who travelled and studied in Europe after 1700 preferred French when corresponding with both the duke's ministers and the duke himself. Interestingly, Latin was barely used. Instead, important documents—such as proposals, memoranda, treaties, and monarch's letters—were submitted in German or Russian and then translated.

Notes

- 1 Vitense, *Geschichte von Mecklenburg*, 240–244.
- 2 Vitense, *Geschichte von Mecklenburg*, 222–227.
- 3 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 32–43.
- 4 Wick, *Versuche zur Errichtung des Absolutismus in Mecklenburg*, 75–108.
- 5 Graff, “Die zweite Ehe des Herzogs Karl Leopold”; Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 176–220.

- 6 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 411–415; Wick, *Versuche zur Errichtung des Absolutismus in Mecklenburg*, 125–193.
- 7 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 86.
- 8 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 13.
- 9 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 23.
- 10 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 89–90; Wick, *Versuche zur Errichtung des Absolutismus in Mecklenburg*, 37–38.
- 11 Friis, *Die Bernstorffs*, 2–8.
- 12 Félicité, *Das Königreich Frankreich und die norddeutschen Hansestädte*, 345–346.
- 13 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2463, fol. 34r–44v, 46r–49r, 55r–56r, 6r1–82v, 95r–99r.
- 14 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2463, fol. 85r–88v.
- 15 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2463, fol. 17r–19v.
- 16 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 64.
- 17 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505.
- 18 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 64.
- 19 See “Extract aus einem von einem schwedischen Minister in Stockholm an den Vice-Präsidenten Lilliestet abgelaßenen Schreiben, aus dem Schwedischen übersetzt” in LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 403, fol. 318r–320r.
- 20 Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 85–88; Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie*, 181–191; Kuhfuß, *Eine Kulturgeschichte des Französischunterrichts in der frühen Neuzeit*, 273–348.
- 21 Félicité, *Das Königreich Frankreich und die norddeutschen Hansestädte*, 344. On the use of French and Latin at the diplomatic congresses of the late seventeenth century, see also the article by Guido Braun in this volume.
- 22 Asche, *Von der reichen hansischen Bürgeruniversität*, 396.
- 23 Schmidt-Rösler, “Von »Viel-Züglern« und vom »fremden Reden-Kwäckern«”, 215.
- 24 Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 99.
- 25 “[...] № 2 und № 3 aber sind, was ich dießerhalb dem alhießigen englischen Envoyé M. de Medous promemoria aufgesetzt und zu deßen mehreren Begreifung gleichhalbs in die französische Sprach übersetzt habe”: LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 014. Kaiser, no. 1559, fol. 157r.
- 26 See for example Eichholtz’s letters to privy councillor Hermann Christian von Wolfradt: LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 014. Kaiser, no. 1593.
- 27 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 616.
- 28 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 619, fol. 21r–22r (Biberstein’s letter from 5 October).
- 29 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 411, fol. 2r–5r.
- 30 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 401, fol. 40r–42r (Charles Leopold to Charles XII); LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 403, fol. 69r–71r, 449r–451r (Charles XII to Frederick William); LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 409 (Charles XII to Charles Leopold).
- 31 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 615, fol. 59r–59v (Frederick IV to Frederick William).
- 32 In 1633–1635 and 1635–1637, Frederick III, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, sent two diplomatic missions to Muscovy in the hope of establishing a trade route to Persia, which would run through the land of the Russian tsar. Although this very ambitious trade project came to nothing, the travels of the Holsteinian embassy to Russia and Persia were documented by its secretary Adam Olearius, whose book became one of the most influential descriptions of Muscovy in the seventeenth century, see Geier, *Russische Kulturgeschichte*, 63–87.
- 33 Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 70–71; Bohlen, “Changes in Russian Diplomacy under Peter the Great”, 346.

- 34 “[...] wie dem noch gestern abends alder mit dem moßkowittichen Ambassadeur in Bekantschafft bin geraten, alß welcher vernehmend, daß ich von Ew. Dchlt. abgeschiket worden, mich sogleich auf Italienisch sehr höfflich angedet, und da ich ihme mit geziemenden Respect in gleichmessiger Sprache geantwortet, unter fortgeführten Discursen zu verstehen gegeben, daß Ew. Dchlt. profitabel sein würde, mit Seiner Zarischen Majt. in Alliance zu treten”: LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 615, fol. 19v–20r (Eichholtz to Frederick William on 9 February 1706).
- 35 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 615, fol. 35v–36r.
- 36 For a short biography of Andrei Petrovich Izmailov, see: Bantysh-Kamenskii, “Izmailov, Andrei Petrovich”, 417–419; about the dispatch of 50 Russian noble students to Italy in 1697, see Okenfuss, “Russian Students in Europe”, 133–137.
- 37 Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii*, 105; Mediger, *Mecklenburg, Rußland und England-Hannover*, 102.
- 38 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1142, fol. 18r (Peter the Great to Charles Leopold on 5 March 1717); LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1143, fol. 2r (Peter the Great to Charles Leopold on 28 December 1713).
- 39 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1162, fol. 116r–117v (Peter the Great to Charles Leopold on 23 October 1723). The non-translated line at the bottom reads: “To His Serene Highness Duke of Mecklenburg” (“К его светлости герцогу мекленбургскому”).
- 40 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1162, fol. 11r–12r (Peter the Great to Charles Leopold on 9 December 1721).
- 41 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1150, fol. 99r.
- 42 Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii*, 114.
- 43 See f. ex. the documents from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA): memorandum submitted by Diederich Joachim von Plessen to Peter the Great in December 1712 (RGADA, f. 67, op. 1, 1712, no. 3); proposal submitted by Georg von Habichtsthal in January 1716 concerning the treaty between Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Russia (RGADA, f. 67, op. 1, 1716, no. 4). The German texts are supplemented by their Russian translations.
- 44 Andreev, *Russkie studenty v nemetskikh universitetakh*; Altbauer, “The Diplomats of Peter the Great”, 10.
- 45 About the biography of Aleksandr Golovkin and his marriage to Catherine Henriette Dohna see Shatokhina-Mordvintseva, “Diplomat Aleksandr Gavrilovich Golovkin”.
- 46 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1140, fol. 5r–7r, 10r–13v; RGADA, f. 67, op. 1, 1719, no. 5.
- 47 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1140, fol. 8r–9r.
- 48 Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii*, 110.
- 49 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1141, fol. 4r–13v, 19r–20r, 26r–26v.
- 50 For the biography of the younger of the brothers—Heinrich Johann Friedrich (Andrei Ivanovich) Ostermann—see: Klueting, “Graf Ostermann”; Bittner, “Beiträge zur Geschichte des Lebens”.
- 51 Klueting, “Graf Ostermann”, 65.
- 52 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1142, fol. 6r–7r (Praskovia Saltykova to Charles Leopold on 15 June 1716).
- 53 Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii*, 113.
- 54 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1152, 1153, 1155, 1156, 1157.
- 55 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1152.
- 56 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1152, fol. 59r, 83r–83v, 234r–235r, 248r–248v.
- 57 LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1177, 1186.

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LHAS—*Landeshauptarchiv (Main State Archive), Schwerin, Germany.*

- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 615 (1706).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 616 (1711–1712).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 002. Dänemark, no. 619 (1711).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 401 (1705–1706).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 403 (1706–1707).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 409 (1713–1714).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 001. Schweden, no. 411 (1712).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1140 (1716–1718).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1141 (1718–1722).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1142 (1716–1718).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1143 (1713).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1150 (1716–1720).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1152 (1718–1721).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1153 (1722–1725).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1155 (1726–1733).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1156 (1740–1741).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1157 (1739–1742).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1162 (1721–1729).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1177 (1741).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 010. Russland, no. 1186 (1762).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 014. Kaiser, no. 1559 (1708).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 014. Kaiser, no. 1593 (1715).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2463 (1709).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2501 (1716–1717).
- LHAS, 02.11.02/1 Acta externa, 021. Preußen, no. 2502 (1717).
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3 The ‘Linguistic Turn’ in Diplomacy in Prussia under Frederick II

Tatjana Trautmann

In the seventeenth century, Latin, as the language of the Church and scholars, was the main language for diplomacy, especially for treaties, but it was also used for oral communication.¹ Over the centuries, Latin had been regarded as the *lingua franca* of diplomacy, as a neutral language unbound to any particular state or nation. Moreover, Latin had great prestige. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the importance of Latin declined, and French became increasingly important in diplomacy and the most important court language in Europe.²

In this paper, I illustrate this turn to French in European diplomacy in the eighteenth century by exploring the ‘linguistic turn’ in Prussian diplomacy. First, I will provide a short overview of the linguistic situation in some European countries closely entangled with Prussia, and then I will focus on the situation in Prussia. In some countries, there is no clear picture of this turn; however, for Prussia, there is an official turning point marked by the cabinet order of Frederick II in June 1740 that stipulated that French should henceforth be the official language for diplomatic correspondence.

I reconstruct this turn to French in the Prussian diplomatic correspondence by examining documents from the Prussian Secret State Archives. The focus is on archival volumes concerning the diplomatic relations between Prussia, Austria, Sweden, and Russia. First, I record the linguistic practices of the Prussian diplomats and Government just before this order (ca. 1735–40); then, the main focus is on examining what effects this order had on Prussian diplomatic communication in the following decades, until Frederick II’s death in 1786. How rapidly and to what extent was the use of French enforced? Was it only between the diplomats and their home court or also among the diplomats stationed at different foreign courts? To achieve these goals, I analysed many volumes from the Prussian Secret State Archives and examined the languages used in the documents. The content of the documents was only considered inasmuch as it helped contextualise the linguistic practice.

Language Practices in the Diplomacies of German States, Austria, Russia, and Sweden in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century

French became increasingly widespread in the German courts during the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. The language was

cultivated mainly in aristocratic circles. The reasons for this development were the orientation to the ideal of French courtly absolutism under Louis XIV, the rich literature and social and cultural life that blossomed in France, and the higher level of codification of the French language in comparison with the German language.³

One example of the use of French in diplomatic correspondence is the letters from the Bavarian envoy Joseph Maria Nikolaus von Neuhaus in St. Petersburg in 1743. He wrote mainly in French, except for letters to the vice-chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire Johann Georg von Königsfeld and the Bavarian chamberlain Johann Maximilian Emanuel von Preysing, to whom he wrote in German.⁴ These latter exchanges were probably considered internal to the Holy Roman Empire, of which German was the main bureaucratic language.

The linguistic practice at the Austrian court partially differed from that outlined above. The court language was Italian until Leopold I (reign 1658–1705), and then it changed to French under Charles VI (1711–1740).⁵ French was further established at the court of Vienna under Maria Theresa (1740–1780), who learned Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish in her youth.⁶ However, the widespread command of French of several rulers (Charles VI, Maria Theresa, Francis I Stephan) had no influence on official linguistic practice. The official languages at the Austrian court were chancellery German and Latin. Latin was especially important for all matters concerning the Holy Roman Empire and Hungary.⁷

The Austrian court even tried to prevent the advancement of French as an international language of diplomacy by insisting on using Latin in the composition of international treaties.⁸ Proof of this policy is an incident that occurred in 1747⁹ that involved a letter from the Russian ambassador Mikhail Bestuzhev from Dresden to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Francis I Stephan. The letter is written in French (maybe to please the emperor by addressing him in his native language¹⁰) and was rejected by the Austrian court with the remark that the official language of communication was Latin. This practice is underlined by a brief consideration of the documents in the Austrian State Archive concerning foreign policy: most documents (letters, treaties, etc.) from the eighteenth century preserved there are in German or Latin.¹¹

A case study based on the sources I analysed in my forthcoming PhD dissertation is appropriate here: Florimond Claude, Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, Austrian ambassador in Saint Petersburg from 1761 to October 1763, wrote 182 letters during the reign of the Russian emperor Peter III and shortly afterwards.¹² In most cases, the addressee was Wenzel Anton, Prince of Kaunitz-Rietberg and, from 1753, Austrian chancellor of state (responsible for foreign affairs). Other addressees were the Austrian ruler Maria Theresa and the vice-chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire Prince Rudolph Joseph of Colloredo-Waldsee. All these letters are written in German. Mercy-Argenteau also wrote three letters in French: these were addressed to Emperor Francis I Stephan, whose command of French was better than his German. Mercy-Argenteau possessed a native command of French and a good command of German, so the double-language correspondence posed no problem for him.

The linguistic practice at the Swedish court in the eighteenth century matched the general tendency described above. The importance of Latin had decreased since the seventeenth century. The linguistic practice in the sphere of diplomacy involved several languages. Swedish was the official and administrative language, and the Swedish kings used it in audiences. French became increasingly important, with many nobles and the wealthy bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century speaking it. King Gustav III (reign 1771–1792) was educated in this language environment, and he preferred to write in French. French was also used in alliance negotiations between Sweden and Prussia in the 1740s. However, German was also a means for diplomatic communication, especially for treaties, and the kings Frederick I (1720–1751) and Adolf Frederick (1751–1771) were German native speakers. Furthermore, many merchants spoke German.¹³ Prussian diplomats at the Swedish court used German and French to communicate, as is evident in a file with memorials and notes from Prussian diplomats at the Swedish court.¹⁴

Linguistic Practices in Prussian Diplomacy under Frederick William I (1713–1740)

French was disseminated at the Prussian court and in other German states, according to Corina Petersilka, who conducted broad research into linguistic practices at the Prussian court.¹⁵

Concerning the linguistic practice in Prussian diplomacy around the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, Ruffert states that during the reign of Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg (1640–1688), Latin was preferred for negotiations. After his successor as elector, Frederick, became king in Prussia in 1701, it was determined that ambassadors should use their native language, namely German.¹⁶ But German was used in the internal communication of the Brandenburg court with its diplomats already under Frederick William, as can be seen in files concerning Prussian residents in Vienna and London from the 1660s onwards.¹⁷ Frederick III of Brandenburg's letters to the Prussian envoy in Vienna from 1688 are in German, too.¹⁸

Frederick William I of Prussia was born on 14 August, 1688. He reigned in Prussia from 25 February, 1713, until his death on 31 May, 1740. Frederick William I was instructed by Huguenot educators and had a very good command of French, which he used sometimes in the early years of his reign. Later, however, he became "allergic to any French fashions"¹⁹ and rejected French cultural elements as "alien and mollycoddled"²⁰. He repudiated the French language and almost exclusively spoke and wrote German.²¹

Consequently, German was the preponderant language in Frederick William I's private and official correspondence and the official language of the Prussian administration. This situation is reflected in the linguistic practices of the Prussian diplomats and government in the years before the change of government in 1740.

If we look at the correspondence between the Prussian minister Gustav Adolf von Gotter in Vienna and the Prussian king Frederick William I in the years

1735–1740, as preserved in the Prussian Secret State Archives in the secret cabinet files,²² almost all the documents are in German. There are only four exceptions, and three are not direct parts of the correspondence but copies of letters, extracts, and memoirs from and to third parties that were sent as appendices. These appendices are in French and not translated, so it can be concluded that the command of French at the Prussian court was common.²³ The fourth exception²⁴ is the only letter addressed by Gotter to the king that is not in German. The topic concerned a letter forwarded by Gotter from an English envoy. Probably, this letter (which is not preserved in the file) was in French, and Gotter adapted the language of his letter to the letter he referred to.

The same language pattern is evident in the preserved correspondence in the secret cabinet files between the Prussian minister plenipotentiary at the court in Vienna, Kaspar Wilhelm von Borcke, and the Prussian king from 1738 to 1740.²⁵ Only one document in this record is in French, and that is a copy of a letter from the imperial field marshal Friedrich Heinrich von Seckendorff to his nephew that Borcke sent as an annex.²⁶ Possibly, Seckendorff wrote in French to reduce the number of potential readers. Borcke does not translate this annex, nor does he refer to the different language of the annex.²⁷ The preserved files from the Prussian embassy in Vienna under Borcke from 1738 to May 1740²⁸ provide the same picture. The records comprise over 200 folios, but there are only four non-German documents: two written in French (a copy of a letter from a cavalry captain named de Melac²⁹ and the declaration of peace between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire³⁰) and two in Latin (the first being a declaration of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI concerning the principality of Nassau-Siegen³¹ and the second expresses concerns about the wedding of the Prince of Sachsen-Hildburghausen³²). The documents in French and Latin originated from the Austrian court and not from Borcke, nor were they translated by him. This practice of not translating fits a memorandum of 1728 about the organisation of foreign affairs in Prussia, which states that future Prussian envoys should learn at least French, Latin, Italian, and Dutch.³³

A record containing memorials and notes from Prussian diplomats at the Swedish court reveals the same pattern. The overwhelming majority of documents until 1740 are in German. There are only a few exceptions in French (communication with the Swedish court by Prussian envoys) or Latin (several documents concerning a church in Tarnówka; Latin was the language of the Church). After 1740, the number of documents in French rose significantly.³⁴ This growth reflects the change in linguistic practice in Prussian diplomacy, as described below.

If we examine the files concerning Russian envoys at the Prussian court, it is evident that diplomats communicated with Frederick William I in German.³⁵ The letters of credence for the Russian envoys sent to Prussia were transmitted always in Russian and in German translation: the change from Frederick William I to Frederick II did not lead to a switch to French.³⁶ One file contains an answer to the Russian empress Catherine II drafted in German.³⁷

Linguistic Practices in Prussian Diplomacy under Frederick II (1740–1786)

Frederick II was born on 24 January 1712 in Berlin. He followed his father on the throne on 31 May 1740. He was raised a francophone, in line with the spirit of the time, and educated by Huguenot teachers from early childhood. He was a Francophile in cultural aspects. His mother preferred a courtly French environment, and he corresponded with her mostly in French. His father, in contrast, disliked his son's admiration for French culture and language and his interest in Calvinistic predestination doctrine. Frederick had to talk and write in German with his father. They had several conflicts (which had deeper reasons than only language issues), and, as a result, Frederick William I temporarily forbade his son access to French books.³⁸

Frederick II used mostly French in his private correspondence and preferred French also in his private oral communication.³⁹ However, it can be assumed that the frequently repeated cliché that Frederick II did not have a good command of German is an exaggeration.⁴⁰ The official language of the Prussian administration remained German under Frederick II. The edicts, decrees, etc. were formulated in German, and German was the working language of the officials. The Directorate General, the justice colleges, and other Prussian institutions communicated with Frederick II in German, and he answered in German, mostly in the form of cabinet orders written by cabinet councillors based on keywords from the king. The German extracts and notes of the cabinet councillors are not translations, and the German documents often contain marginal notes in German by Frederick II's own hand. Thus, the oral working language between Frederick and these councillors was almost certainly German, too.⁴¹

To understand better the linguistic situation in Prussia, it is important to remember that there was a significant population of French Huguenots there, especially in Berlin. The Huguenots were substantially present as educators, court officials, and in the Prussian officer corps. Many French books were published in Berlin. Huguenot scholars significantly contributed to the scientific circles of the Enlightenment in Berlin. They were strongly represented in the Berlin Academy of Sciences, which adopted French in 1745 as its official language for its proceedings and publications. At one point, one-third of the members were Huguenot scholars, including the long-standing perpetual secretary Jean Henri Samuel Formey. Francophone diplomacy provided the Prussian regime with the benefit that Huguenots and other non-Germans could be mobilised for state service.⁴²

Frederick II—in contrast to his father, who was not very interested or skilful in foreign policy affairs, as he admitted himself⁴³—was highly engaged in foreign policy. The Prussian envoys stationed at foreign courts reported directly to him (and sometimes parallel to the cabinet ministers of the foreign department),⁴⁴ and Frederick II issued instructions for the reply letters to the envoys, which were then written out in the foreign department. Furthermore, in important matters, the king signed the dispatches to the envoys before they were sent. In very secret affairs, the foreign department was excluded from the communication between Frederick II and the envoys.⁴⁵

The area of foreign affairs differed from the rest of the administration regarding linguistic practice. Shortly after his accession to the throne, Frederick II adopted, at the beginning of June 1740, a cabinet order:

The King informs the Department of Foreign Affairs that in future, in order to avoid unnecessary circuitousness, the dispatches and hand letters to the foreign courts, with the exception of imperial, German empire and litigation matters, will be written in French, also the reports and news of the royal envoys residing at foreign courts shall be done in this language.⁴⁶

The emphasis on the “avoidance of unnecessary circuitousness” is remarkable. Probably, Frederick II—after handling German and French files daily—had concluded French was better suited for precise and tight diction than German was.⁴⁷

Frederick II’s personal preference was not the only reason for the adoption of French as the working language of the Prussian foreign ministry. French had become increasingly widespread in international diplomacy in the preceding decades. Many German states had French-speaking courts in this period.⁴⁸ Regarding the continuing spread of the French language in Europe, Prussia played an important role. Petersilka concludes that the “accession to the throne of Frederick II advanced French as the international language for negotiations”.⁴⁹

The cabinet ministers of the foreign department and the Prussian envoys stationed at foreign courts followed the cabinet order and wrote to the Prussian king in French because French was the mandated language for diplomatic correspondence.⁵⁰ However, as McDonald states, the “Cabinets-Ministerium did not pass seamlessly [...] into French upon Frederick’s accession”,⁵¹ and German remained important for diplomats because the internal administration matters in Prussian and Holy Roman Empire business were still conducted in German. The increased demand for French offered possibilities for non-Prussians with a good command of French to enter Prussian service.⁵²

Petersilka examined internal correspondence from the Prussian Department of Foreign Affairs. The cabinet ministers for foreign affairs wrote to Frederick II in French, and if he answered in his own hand, the answer was invariably in French, too. If the answer was formulated by a cabinet secretary, it was sometimes in French and sometimes in German. In contrast, the correspondence between the cabinet ministers and the cabinet councillors is in German. The written and oral communication (handed down by dictated notes) between the Prussian king Frederick II and his cabinet councillors was frequently in German. Marginal notes by the king are mostly in French.⁵³

Although Petersilka concentrates on the (political) correspondence of Frederick II, cabinet extracts, and transcripts of cabinet orders, my study explores the sources from the Prussian diplomatic service: embassy files, communication of the king and the cabinet with diplomats, communication among Prussian diplomats, and external communication with diplomats from other countries. In addition, I consider administrative and consular correspondence.

The change in linguistic practice is clearly evident in the diplomatic correspondence from Prussian envoys in Vienna. If we examine the correspondence

in 1742–1743 between the Prussian envoy field marshal Friedrich Ludwig zu Dohna-Carwinden from Vienna and the Prussian king Frederick II, as preserved in the Prussian Secret State Archives in the secret cabinet files,⁵⁴ the majority of letters and appendices are in French. However, there are quite a few (approximately 20%) in German. These German correspondences concern mostly administrative matters (costs of travel, journal of Dohna's stay in Vienna) or military matters (lists of regiments and officers, letter of a lieutenant to Dohna, battle plan, lieutenant patent). This finding corresponds to Petersilka's observation that German remained the common language in the Prussian administration and army.⁵⁵ The importance of German in the Prussian army is underlined by the fact that foreigners who wanted to serve as officers under Frederick II had to have a basic command of German.⁵⁶ This point is exemplified in a letter of Dohna to the Prussian king, in which he reports that he is sending a report from a battle in Italy that he received from Marshal Vasquez,⁵⁷ together with a German translation.⁵⁸ The original report from Vasquez is not preserved; most probably it was written in Spanish. The translation indicates that Dohna did not expect the source language to be understood at the Prussian court. Regarding other languages, it is interesting that Dohna transmitted a letter from an Italian painter in Italian without any translation.⁵⁹ This practice of not translating fits the above-mentioned memorandum of 1728 about languages that future Prussian envoys should learn.

The file contains an interesting phenomenon: an introduction to a letter of the Prussian king in German that refers to the king in the third person, probably written by a privy councillor, and a letter by the king himself, written in French.⁶⁰ This example illustrates that the new official rule of the use of languages was not always followed consistently in Prussian administrative circles. In my opinion, these internal tensions about linguistic practices derived from the parallel use of German and French. French should have been used for foreign affairs and diplomacy in general, whereas German should have been used for administrative, military, imperial, and litigation matters. However, these spheres were never clearly defined and delimited. Even if a Prussian public servant wanted to follow exactly the language policy ordered by Frederick II, there would remain much room for interpretation, because some subjects could be viewed as more administrative than diplomatic, and *vice versa*. In addition, Frederick's privy councillors were mostly not noblemen and not very well educated,⁶¹ so they perhaps simply lacked French language skills.

The remaining purely diplomatic correspondence from 1746 between the Prussian diplomat Otto Christoph von Podewils in Vienna and the Prussian king Frederick II makes the overall picture even clearer.⁶² Most of the more than 200 letters are in French, and only a few are in German. The latter concern mostly imperial matters (e. g., salutatory addresses to the Holy Roman emperor and empress⁶³; memoirs and answers by the Austrian court⁶⁴) that were exempted from the use of French, according to the cabinet order from June 1740. Other exceptions in German were mostly sent as appendices to letters: an official Austrian gazette extract,⁶⁵ administrative matters (costs of travel),⁶⁶ military matters (a new invention for cannon drilling,⁶⁷ list of losses⁶⁸). In addition, there are some dispatches concerning political treatises and books published in German in the Holy Roman

Empire.⁶⁹ This file contained other interesting documents: two lists of dispatches that Podewils received from his home court in June and July 1746.⁷⁰ The lists are written in French, and if a rescript is in German, this is noted explicitly.

Even more evident is the change if we examine the preserved files from the Prussian embassy in Vienna under Kaspar Wilhelm von Borce. I mentioned above that, until May 1740, there were only four non-German documents: two in French and two in Latin. The order concerning the use of French was implemented immediately in the communication with Borce: in the same letter from 10 June 1740, in which the new Prussian king informs Borce about his accession to the throne he also instructs him about the changes in language use:

I command you to always write your relations in French and to translate in the same language the news you inform me about. If the things you report about concern only legal disputes or such other subjects, you may write to me in German.⁷¹

Borce instantly adapted; his answer and postscripts the next day are completely written in French.⁷² By analysing all the documents in the period from June 1740 to January 1741,⁷³ it is evident that the proportion of French–German changed completely. The majority of documents that comprise more than 500 folios are now in French, with only a few in German. The German documents concern mostly Austrian or Holy Roman Empire matters (e. g., mourning order,⁷⁴ declaration of the palatine of the Rhine,⁷⁵ extracts concerning the last will of King Ferdinand,⁷⁶ copy of a letter to the *elector* of Bavaria⁷⁷). This development is in line with the cabinet order from June 1740. Latin continued to play a minor role; the only documents in this language are the defensive pact between Sweden and the Ottoman Empire⁷⁸ and the title of Maria Theresa.⁷⁹ Translations of Latin documents were not found anywhere in the files. This situation is unsurprising, as Latin was the main language of diplomacy before French and continued to persist, for example, at the Austrian court, as I mentioned above. Therefore, a widespread command of Latin can be presumed.⁸⁰

This main development is evident also in the preserved correspondence from Prussian diplomats in other countries. A very good example is the documents from the Prussian embassy in St. Petersburg. The rescripts from Frederick William I to the Prussian envoy in Russia in 1730, Axel von Mardefeld,⁸¹ are all in German. In a file with letters from the kings Frederick William I and Frederick II to Mardefeld concerning Prussian–Polish relations from February 1740 to August 1742,⁸² there is a clear linguistic turn: all the letters by Frederick William I are in German, and all by Frederick II are in French. In addition, there are only two documents in a different language: two extracts of treaties in Latin.⁸³ Rescripts from Frederick II to Mardefeld from the years 1741–1742⁸⁴ are mostly in French, too. Only a few documents are in German (a declaration concerning Silesia⁸⁵ and official gazette articles⁸⁶) or Latin (a declaration of the Austrian ruler Maria Theresa⁸⁷). One document, a draft of a letter to the Prussian envoys Borce and Gotter in Vienna, is both in German and French.⁸⁸ In a file with dispatches from Mardefeld from 1740 to 1742,⁸⁹ all the documents are in French.

A case study of the sources I analysed in my forthcoming dissertation revealed that Colonel Bernhard von der Goltz, Prussian envoy in Saint Petersburg from March to December 1762, wrote 68 letters during the reign of the Russian emperor Peter III and shortly afterwards.⁹⁰ Most of these letters (56) are addressed to the Prussian King Frederick II. The letters to King Frederick II, and seven letters to Count Karl Wilhelm Finck von Finckenstein, Prussian cabinet minister since 1749, are written in French. Five other letters addressed to the secretary of Frederick and privy councillor August Friedrich Eichel are written in German. These letters are very short and served most likely as cover letters. This situation underlines the disparities in the Prussian administration regarding linguistic practices, as well as the above-mentioned point that Frederick's privy councillors were often not very well educated. Perhaps Eichel had little or no command of French.

The Prussian embassy files from Stockholm draw the same picture: dispatches from the envoy Karl Wilhelm von Finckenstein from 1735 to 1739 are all in German,⁹¹ whereas dispatches and drafts from the envoy Jakob Friedrich von Rohd in 1746⁹² and 1753–1755⁹³ are all in French. Petersilka, who examined the 46-volume edition of the political correspondence, which comprises mainly outgoing letters and instructions from the secret cabinet, arrived at a similar conclusion: the overwhelming majority of documents are in French, and only a few are in German, and these concern mostly imperial matters. Even autograph letters from Frederick II to other rulers in the Holy Roman Empire are usually written in French. Moreover, Petersilka observes there are letters in German to certain envoys who apparently did not have a command of French.⁹⁴

French was not only established in the diplomatic correspondence between Prussian diplomats abroad and their king from 1740 onwards but also among Prussian diplomats stationed at different foreign courts. Examples of this development are excerpts of reports from Vienna, Stockholm, The Hague, and Venice composed by Wahrendorf in Russia in 1747,⁹⁵ all in French. The preserved correspondence between the Prussian envoys in Constantinople and the Prussian envoys in Petersburg in 1763–1768⁹⁶ and the correspondence between the Prussian envoys in Petersburg and the embassy in Stockholm in 1744–1746⁹⁷ are completely in French, too. The preserved correspondence between the Prussian embassies in Petersburg and Stockholm in 1764–1775⁹⁸ is also mostly in French. Only one letter is in German (a question from a Mister Ulf concerning relatives in St. Petersburg). In addition, in the Prussian Department of Foreign Affairs, foreign letters written in languages other than French or German were translated into French, so that all Prussian diplomats could read them.⁹⁹

We find traces of the switch to French also in the communication of the cabinet ministers for foreign affairs. These ministers wrote not only in French to Frederick II but also to the Prussian envoys at foreign courts. For example, Heinrich von Podewils wrote to Mardefeld in St. Petersburg in French about the Russian envoy in Berlin, Casimir Christoph von Brackel. We find in the same file a letter in German, but this concerns administrative matters (postal traffic and offices).¹⁰⁰

French was also the language of communication between Frederick II and his cabinet ministers while dealing with foreign diplomats stationed at the Prussian

court and in direct communication with these diplomats, as is evident in certain files about Russian envoys at the Prussian court.¹⁰¹ However, passport matters for foreign diplomats were apparently treated as administrative business, and therefore the communication about passports was conducted in German, as documents in a file concerning Russian legation secretaries indicate.¹⁰² The Russian diplomats answered in French or German, according to the language they were addressed in, so it seems a command of both languages was expected from foreign diplomats residing at the Prussian court. In this respect, Russian diplomats differed from some Russian court members who spoke French badly (e. g., Bestuzhev-Riumin, chancellor, minister of foreign affairs, under Empress Elisabeth).¹⁰³ A German letter from Bestuzhev-Riumin to Prussian cabinet ministers concerning the Russian legation secretary is preserved in the same file.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, it seems not all Russian envoys in Berlin had a good command of French. For example, Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk wrote most of his answers and letters to the Prussian court in German, even if most communication about and with him was in French. Only one very short letter from him in French is preserved in the file.¹⁰⁵

Sometimes, even the diplomatic communication in the Holy Roman Empire was in French if the topic was not limited to imperial matters. An envoy from the Electoral Palatinate stationed in Ratisbon wrote in French, in 1746, to Berlin about the forthcoming Russian envoy there, Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk.¹⁰⁶

The switch to French intensified the need for qualified recruits for the Prussian diplomatic service. The lack of manpower had worsened since the professionalisation of the diplomatic service from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards.¹⁰⁷ A training programme, called the *Pépinière*, was introduced in 1747 by the Prussian foreign department. The candidates studied diplomatic correspondence and were taught how to write reports, etc. in French and German, and they practised French and other languages. Although the programme did not last many years, it had some effect.¹⁰⁸ In 1765, the Military Academy of the Nobles (*l'Académie des Nobles*) was founded in Berlin. The education there included the study of the French language for six years. Although the majority of graduates went into military service, they were also notably eligible for a career in the diplomatic service.¹⁰⁹

Administrative and Consuls' Correspondence

The administrative and appointment files concerning diplomats preserved in the Prussian Secret State Archives¹¹⁰ also offer insights into linguistic practice. Here, as expected, the documents are mostly in German, but during the time of Frederick II, we find increasingly more documents in French.

In a file about Prussian diplomats in London¹¹¹ in 1663–1804, we find that, until 1728, almost all documents are in German.¹¹² The later ones, starting in 1741, are more often written in French. One document is very interesting because it is bilingual:¹¹³ Frederick II issued an order to the legation pay office in French, and his cabinet minister Heinrich von Podewils wrote the same order below in German. Here again, the internal tensions concerning linguistic practices deriving from an

unclear distinction between the administrative and diplomatic spheres are evident. It seems cabinet ministers sometimes acted as translators between the personal linguistic practice of the king and the language preferences of administrative institutions. Following the death of Frederick II, the main language of the documents switches back to German, probably because Frederick's successor, Frederick William II, repealed French as a court language.¹¹⁴

Sometimes, both languages were used in parallel. In 1742, the Prussian king appointed a new agent and councillor of commerce in Moscow, Hermann Adolph Boltenhagen. The approbation certificates are written in German, but the letter in which the Prussian envoy in Russia, Mardefeld, is informed about the approbation is in French.¹¹⁵ We find the same pattern in another document concerning the appointment of Ulrich Kühn as the Prussian consul and councillor of commerce in Petersburg in 1742.¹¹⁶

In this file about Prussian consuls in Petersburg from 1726 to 1798,¹¹⁷ most documents are in German, even during the reign of Frederick II; there are only a few exceptions in French. In another file, an issue concerning a new Prussian consul in Russia in 1769¹¹⁸ is handled in German, too. The same pattern, with a preponderance of German, is found in a file about imperial legation secretaries, consuls, and salt supervisors ("*Salzfaktoren*") from 1724 to 1805.¹¹⁹ Here, the exceptions are letters from 1750 written by a French merchant¹²⁰ and a plea in Italian by a prisoner.¹²¹ Probably affairs concerning agents, consuls, and councillors of commerce were not regarded as part of the diplomatic sphere; therefore, French was not the main language for such affairs.¹²²

In a file containing general decrees for all Prussian envoys at foreign courts,¹²³ almost all the decrees issued during the reign of Frederick William I are in German. The only exception is a French version of a decree from 1738 concerning orders for clothing, carriages and tapestries from Berlin, which was sent to the Prussian envoy in Paris Jean de Chambrier.¹²⁴ Coming from Neuchâtel, de Chambrier was very likely a French native speaker and perhaps did not have a good command of German. Interestingly, the documents during the reign of Frederick II are in German, too. Therefore, it can be assumed these matters were regarded more as administrative than diplomatic.

In another file concerning the affairs of Prussian diplomats (legation secretaries, consuls, residents, and agents) from 1718 to 1769,¹²⁵ all documents from the reign of Frederick William I are also in German. The only exception aligns with the above-mentioned case of Chambrier: a letter from 1739 from Jean-Henri Andrié,¹²⁶ the Prussian envoy in London, who, like Chambrier, was born in Neuchâtel.¹²⁷ It can be assumed that he, too, was a native French speaker with limited proficiency in German. From 1740 onwards, the number of documents in French in this file increased, though the language was not preponderant. This situation is in line with the language policy of Frederick II but also supports the earlier assumption that not all of these affairs were considered part of the diplomatic sphere.

In a file containing instructions for detailed reports that Prussian envoys ought to deliver annually about the court and the country they were stationed in, we find the already observed pattern: the instructions during the reign of Frederick William I

are in German, but the later ones under Frederick II are in French. Under Frederick William II, instructions were mostly written in French, too.¹²⁸ In one draft for such an instruction (not dated, ca. 1760s), it is specified that the envoys must report how foreign affairs are treated in the country they reside in, including the languages in which foreign affairs are conducted.¹²⁹ Apparently, the Prussian Government under Frederick II was interested in the language practice at other courts.

In a file concerning the affairs of foreign envoys at the court of Berlin from 1711 to 1810,¹³⁰ almost all the documents from the reign of Frederick II are in German, as the topics addressed (e.g., presents for these envoys, financial and residential matters) are predominantly administrative. Exceptions in French comprise an order to move to Wrocław (1741),¹³¹ the protection of the opera from flames (1742),¹³² the wish of Frederick II that no foreign envoys visit him (1783),¹³³ and an inquiry about a deceased person (1786).¹³⁴

Matters concerning the exemption of excise taxes for Russian envoys at the Prussian court were handled in German throughout the eighteenth century.¹³⁵ In other words, tax issues were not considered part of the diplomatic sphere, and therefore were not handled in French. The same pattern is evident in a file about Russian envoys at the Prussian court who were indebted to local merchants,¹³⁶ as well as in another file concerning debts of Swedish envoys.¹³⁷

A dispute about a rental contract, in which the Russian envoy Heinrich Gross was entangled in 1749, was conducted mostly in German and, therefore, obviously treated as an administrative business and not a diplomatic one.¹³⁸

Frederick II and his cabinet minister Karl Wilhelm Finck von Finckenstein communicated in 1786 about a present for the long-standing Russian envoy in Berlin, Prince Vladimir Sergeevich Dolgorukii, on the occasion of his recall. The communication is in French, but the letter in which Frederick informs Finckenstein that he ordered the emission of money for the present is in German. Apparently, financial issues belonged to the administrative sector and were, therefore, handled in German.¹³⁹

Conclusion

My source analysis revealed that the switch to using French in Prussian diplomatic correspondence happened very quickly. Almost immediately after the cabinet order of June 1740, the majority of diplomatic letters were written in French. The use of French was not limited to communication between Prussian diplomats and their home court; French was also the language used for communication among Prussian diplomats stationed at different foreign courts. Exceptions to the new rule concern mostly imperial matters and are, therefore, concordant with the order. The use of French was restricted to the sphere of foreign affairs and diplomacy. However, the new official linguistic practice was not always followed with consistency in Prussian administrative circles. These internal tensions can be explained by the parallel use of German as the dominant language for administrative, military, imperial, and litigation matters, as the analysis of both internal (between the Prussian court and Prussian envoys) and external (with foreign envoys) communication

revealed. However, the spheres were not clearly defined, so there remained much room for interpretation of the official policy.

Frederick II died on August 17, 1786. His successor on the Prussian throne was his nephew Frederick William II, born on September 25, 1744, who was raised by French-speaking Huguenot educators. Nevertheless, Frederick II was the only mostly francophone ruler in Prussia in the eighteenth century; Frederick William II quickly repealed French as a court language and promoted the German language and culture, for example, in the theatre.¹⁴⁰ Despite this, French continued to be used in conversation, and the cabinet ministry (Prussian foreign department) did not immediately revert from French to German following Frederick II's death and still used French for correspondence for certain documents even until 1859.¹⁴¹

Notes

- 1 Cf. Bély, *Les relations internationales en Europe*, 56.
- 2 Cf. Ruffert, *Das Gesandtschaftszeremoniell des brandenburgisch-preußischen Hofes*, 493; and Bély, *Les relations internationales en Europe*, 586.
- 3 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 15–19. But not all German aristocrats—especially in small principalities—were francophone: Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 21. Overall, Protestant German courts were more “Frenchified” than Catholic ones: Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 45.
- 4 AVPRI, f. 6/1, d. 16. I am grateful to Vladislav Rjéoutski for this suggestion.
- 5 Cf. Unterreiner, *Maria Theresia*, 57; Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 41–42.
- 6 Cf. Bély, *Les relations internationales en Europe*, 490; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 22–25. A view on the correspondence of Maria Theresa shows that she used French, German and Italian for communication (Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 25, 60). The family correspondence of Maria Theresa was mainly in French: cf. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 25 and 217.
- 7 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 42; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 25; Ammon, *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache*, 703.
- 8 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 43.
- 9 Thanks to Olga Khavanova who made this remark at the conference “Languages of Diplomacy in the Eighteenth-Century World”, organised at the German Historical Institute in Moscow in January 2022.
- 10 Francis Stephan was born Lorrainer; the emperor's command of French was better than German: cf. Zedinger, *Franz Stephan von Lothringen*, 41; Unterreiner, *Maria Theresia*, 58–59.
- 11 Fonds consulted in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Vienna [HHStA]: HHStA, SB AKA 53; StK Preußen. A detailed, quantitative analysis of the sources is still a desideratum for research.
- 12 Partly published in *Sbornik Imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva*, vol. 18, 46. Archival material: HHStA, Russland I, 38; Russland II, 45 and 46.
- 13 Cf. Olsson, “Historical and Sociocultural Preconditions”, 1242; Jankrift, “Cuius religio, eius lingua?”, 30; and (more detailed) Holm, ‘...*The King Answers by Himself in Swedish*’.
- 14 Riksarkivet (RA), Borussica, vol. 179. I am grateful to Sophie Holm, who shared with me her findings at the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet).
- 15 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*.
- 16 Cf. Ruffert, *Das Gesandtschaftszeremoniell des brandenburgisch-preußischen Hofes*, 493–495.

- 17 Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PK), I. HA Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z A, fasc. 11 and Z D, fasc. 6.
- 18 GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 4.
- 19 Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 28f (here and further my own translation of the quotations from this book).
- 20 Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 47.
- 21 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 32, 47–48. According to Ruffert, *Das Gesandtschaftszeremoniell des brandenburgisch-preußischen Hofes*, 494, his rejection of French should be regarded more differentiatedly.
- 22 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 I.
- 23 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 I, fol. 17r, 21r–22r and 41r.
- 24 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 I, fol. 43r (26.04.1740).
- 25 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 K.
- 26 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 K, fol. 5r (21.08.1739).
- 27 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 2 K, fol. 4r (22.08.1739).
- 28 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 10, 10a, 11, 12.
- 29 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 11.
- 30 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 12, fol. 10r–12r.
- 31 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 12, fol. 15.
- 32 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 10a.
- 33 Cf. Ruffert, *Das Gesandtschaftszeremoniell des brandenburgisch-preußischen Hofes*, 490.
- 34 RA, Borussica, vol. 179.
- 35 Cf. a file comprising the correspondence from the Russian envoy Casimir Christoph von Brackel 1737–1740: GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no 3 N.
- 36 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11 Akten, no. 7137, 7141, 7142, 7143, 7144.
- 37 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11 Akten, no. 7144, fol. 17.
- 38 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 22–23, 32–33, 48–56.
- 39 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 86–89.
- 40 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 83.
- 41 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 147–151.
- 42 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 29–37, Böhm, *Sprachenwechsel*, 85–86 and McDonald, “Striving After Style”, 20. For more on the Huguenots in Prussia and their linguistic practice see: Böhm, *Sprachenwechsel*. French was more than simply a language. It was an eminent sociolect. McDonald offers in his analysis an insight into the development of a certain “style” alongside the practical benefits: cf. McDonald, “Striving After Style”, 20–35.
- 43 Cf. Winter, *Friedrich der Große*, 179–180.
- 44 For the development of the Prussian foreign department under Frederick William I, see: Ruffert, *Das Gesandtschaftszeremoniell des brandenburgisch-preußischen Hofes*, 69–70.
- 45 Cf. *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*, XII–XIII.
- 46 “Der König macht dem Departement der auswärtigen Affairen bekannt, daß inskünftige zu Vermeidung unnützer Weitläufigkeiten die Ausfertigungen und Handbriefe an die auswärtigen Höfe, ausgenommen in denen kaiserlichen und Teutschen Reichs-, auch Proceß-Sachen, in französischer Sprache abgefasst werden, auch die Berichte und Zeitungen der an auswärtigen Höfen subsistirenden königlichen Gesandten in dieser Sprache geschehen sollen”: Cabinetsordre an die Etatsminister vom Departement der auswärtigen Affairen, 02.06.1740, *Acta Borussica*, 6–7 (my translation).
- 47 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 159.
- 48 Cf. McDonald, “Striving After Style”, 19.
- 49 Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 38.
- 50 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 148.
- 51 Cf. McDonald, “Striving After Style”, 26.

- 52 Cf. McDonald, "Striving After Style", 27.
- 53 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 160–162.
- 54 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 F.
- 55 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 57.
- 56 Cf. Straubel, "Er möchte nur wissen, daß die Armée mir gehöret", 213.
- 57 Juan Vasquez Conde de Pinos de la Puente.
- 58 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 F, fol. 18r (02.03.1743).
- 59 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 F, fol. 74r–76r (24.04.1743).
- 60 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 F, fol. 13r (19.02.1743).
- 61 Cf. Vehse, *Eduard Vehse's Illustrierte Geschichte des preußischen Hofes*, 465.
- 62 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M.
- 63 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 4r–5r.
- 64 Cf. e.g. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 98r–99r, 176r–177r, 217r–218r.
- 65 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 18r.
- 66 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 86r.
- 67 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 213r.
- 68 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 234r.
- 69 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 43r–44r and 126r–127r. There are also some French letters in the file concerning this subject.
- 70 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 43 M, fol. 150r and 151r–152r.
- 71 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 1r (my translation from French).
- 72 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 13r–15r.
- 73 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, 14 and 14a.
- 74 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 6r.
- 75 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 176r.
- 76 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 14, fol. 87r–91r.
- 77 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 55r–72r.
- 78 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 13, fol. 56r–57r.
- 79 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I, no. 14, fol. 45r.
- 80 The Prussian king himself, Frederick II, probably did not know Latin, cf. Winter, *Friedrich der Große*, 162.
- 81 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 10.
- 82 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 12a.
- 83 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 12a, fol. 27r and 32r.
- 84 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 12.
- 85 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, fol. 2r–3r.
- 86 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, fol. 48r–55r.
- 87 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, fol. 57r.
- 88 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, fol. 7r.
- 89 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 55 A, Bd. 1. In the file is—besides the dispatches from Mardefeld—a letter from the Russian statesman Ostermann to the Prussian king (fol. 3r–4r). Although Ostermann was a German native speaker, that letter was written in French, too.
- 90 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96 and 11.
- 91 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 3.
- 92 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96, no. 66.
- 93 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Stockholm I, no. 10.
- 94 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 160. The envoys who lacked the command of French were councillors of commerce, officers and the like. I will come back to this topic later on.
- 95 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 19.
- 96 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 25, Bd. 1.

- 97 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Stockholm II A, no. 14.
- 98 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81 Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I, no. 28.
- 99 Cf. McDonald, "Striving After Style", 23.
- 100 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Akten, no. 7137, fol. 11r (29.08.1740) and fol. 22r (16.12.1741).
- 101 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Akten, no. 7138, 7139, 7141 and 7144. In no. 7141 we also find traces from the above-mentioned communication of the cabinet councillors of Frederick II. As expected, the letters from a councillor preserved here are in German.
- 102 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Akten, no. 7140.
- 103 Cf. Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, 159.
- 104 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11 Akten, no. 7140, fol. 14r–15r.
- 105 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Akten, no. 7141. Keyserlingk was a Baltic German, so it can be assumed that German was his native language.
- 106 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Akten, no. 7141, fol. 3r–5r.
- 107 Cf. McDonald, "Striving After Style", 25–26.
- 108 For more details see McDonald, "Striving After Style", 30–31.
- 109 For more details see McDonald, "Striving After Style", 31–32.
- 110 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung.
- 111 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z D, fasc. 6.
- 112 The same pattern is visible in a file concerning Brandenburg-Prussian diplomats at the Polish court in Warsaw from 1594–1739 (GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z E1, fasc. 1). All documents during the reign of Frederick William I are in German.
- 113 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z D, fasc. 6, fol. 28r.
- 114 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 29.
- 115 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z E2, fasc. 3, fol. 5r–7r. The letter in which Mardefeld recommends Boltenhagen is in French as well as the letter in which Mardefeld reports that he informed Boltenhagen about the approbation (fol. 9r and 12r).
- 116 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z E2, fasc. 5, fol. 5r–9r.
- 117 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z E2, fasc. 5.
- 118 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z E2, fasc. 1, fol. 1r–3r.
- 119 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 43.
- 120 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 43, fol. 29r–33r.
- 121 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 43, fol. 24r–25r. As mentioned elsewhere, a command of Italian at the Prussian court was expected so that Italian was not translated.
- 122 The main tasks for consuls weren't diplomatic issues but the protection and development of commerce: Cf. e.g. Mézin, *Correspondance des consuls de France*, XIII; and Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy*, 149. Already Abraham de Wicquefort stated at the end of the seventeenth century in his work on ambassadors and their functions that agents, consuls etc. were different from envoys as they handled no state affairs (Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, 63).
- 123 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 1.
- 124 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 1, fol. 21r.
- 125 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 2.
- 126 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 2, fol. 15r–17r.
- 127 Neuchâtel was governed in personal union by the Prussian kings since 1707. For more on Neuchâtel and Prussia, see e.g.: Weber, *Lokale Interessen und große Strategie*; and Stribny, *Die Könige von Preußen*.
- 128 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 3.
- 129 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 3, fol. 17r.
- 130 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 36.
- 131 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 36, fol. 22r.

- 132 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 36, fol. 23r.
133 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 36, fol. 32r.
134 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 36, fol. 35r.
135 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 39.
136 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 41, fol. 1r–27r. Only one letter by the Russian diplomat Chernyshev (spelled Czernichev in the documents) from 1746 is in French (fol. 6r–9r). Maybe he did not have a good command of German.
137 GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9 Allgemeine Verwaltung, Z L, fasc. 49.
138 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11 Akten, no. 7142, fol. 21r–30r.
139 Cf. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11 Akten, no. 7144, fol. 19r–22r.
140 Cf. Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, 29 and 33; Pille, “Der deutsche Dichter aus Frankreich”, 68.
141 Cf. McDonald, “Striving After Style”, 26 and Wendt, *Enzyklopädie des französischen Unterrichts*, 32.

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GStA PK—*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Secret State Archives of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation)*, Berlin, Germany

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 9.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81, Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Wien I.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81, Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Petersburg I.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81, Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Stockholm I.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 81, Gesandtschaften vor 1808, Stockholm II A.

GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 96.

HHStA—*Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Home, Court and State Archives)*, Vienna, Austria

HHStA, SB, AKA 53.

HHStA, StK Preußen.

HHStA, Russland I, 38.

HHStA, Russland II, 45 and 46.

RA—*Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives)*, Stockholm, Sweden

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4 Languages in the Diplomatic Correspondence Between France and Territories of the Holy Roman Empire

Nina Pösch

In eighteenth-century Europe, French was, as has often been noted, the most important language of culture and international relations. It was a language that European nobles and intellectuals were expected to learn and understand, and it served as the language of the court in some, mostly larger European countries whose population was not predominantly francophone. In addition, French was one of the most important languages of literature, arts, and sciences, alongside Latin and Italian. The predominance of French had its origins in the second half of the seventeenth century, when, during the reign of Louis XIV, the language became prominent for conversation and culture among the European nobility, as well as a commonly studied language among the educated middle class.¹ This linguistic development had political origins, resulting from the important political role of France in European politics and the influence of its court at Versailles on elites across the entire continent, who sought to imitate it.

During the early modern period, as Latin was losing influence in educated circles, different vernacular European languages competed for the role of international language.² The French were at an advantage regarding linguistic hegemony due to their country's political importance. However, French did not become the sole language of diplomacy and international relations, as other languages continued to be used in this capacity, including at important congresses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ There was, however, an increased awareness by the French of their language's cultural and political importance, which led to an insistence on using it during relations with foreigners.⁴

In the Holy Roman Empire, French had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, become an important secondary language of the upper classes and especially the nobility. At some of the Empire's courts—the royal court of Prussia—it became the primary language of conversation, and it was expected that members of the social and political elites spoke it fluently, to the point that those whose language skills did not meet these standards were subjected to mockery and sought to hide their lack of fluent French.⁵ Widely taught as a foreign language—in the eighteenth century mainly by private French tutors, often Huguenot refugees or other French immigrants—French would remain the most prominent modern foreign language for German students until the first half of the twentieth century, when it was replaced by English.⁶

The use of French was particularly prominent at certain courts, such as the Prussian court during the reign of Frederick II,⁷ which may have inspired other, less powerful princes to copy Prussia and assign French more importance in their own courts as well. Frederick made French the primary language not only of his court but also of his kingdom's academic and cultural output, making it the language of administration and publication for the Berlin Academy of Sciences in 1744, when French replaced Latin in this role.⁸ When the Academy held an essay contest in 1783 about the role of French as a universal language,⁹ one of the answers, by French writer Antoine de Rivarol, proposed that it was appropriate to speak of a "French world", a francophone community of European elites, just as one would have once spoken of a "Roman world".¹⁰ This idea of a francophone Europe, in which French speakers found their own language at the courts of foreign princes, was echoed by visitors to the Prussian court at Potsdam during the reign of Frederick II. Voltaire noted, during his stay in Potsdam, he felt like he was in France: "One speaks only our language", noting that knowledge of German was only necessary during the journey to Potsdam but not at court.¹¹ In another letter, he states that "the language one speaks least at Court is German. I have not heard a word of it", adding proudly that "our language and our literature have made more conquests than Charlemagne".¹²

French was frequently used in correspondence by educated German speakers, and French literature was widely read. However, it has been noted that some contemporaries overestimated the role of the French language among German-speaking elites,¹³ inaccurately portraying them as *exclusively* francophone. Most smaller courts remained generally German speaking, although French was understood and used widely. At the court of the emperor in Vienna, German was often the predominant language.¹⁴ The use of French was primarily a phenomenon of the social and political elites, as well as the educated middle classes. Outside of the society of the courts and among intellectuals in German states, knowledge of French was scarce and mainly restricted to those whose occupation required them to communicate with the upper class.¹⁵ At the same time, the Holy Roman Empire never completely abandoned Latin until its dissolution in 1806. Traditionally the language of administration, diplomacy, culture and the Church, the importance of Latin declined during the early modern period,¹⁶ in particular from the seventeenth century onwards, but it continued to be used in certain contexts, such as education, religion, and the sciences. The loss of some of Latin's former fields of usage to French was part of a fundamental cultural development in Europe, brought about by the influence of French culture and the political importance of France. France had, to a certain degree, replaced ancient Rome as a cultural point of reference, making its language the language of the present, whereas Latin increasingly became a language of the past.¹⁷ It has also been argued that the Holy Roman Empire, by its very insistence on the use of Latin in diplomatic circles and its attempts to impose its use on others, had inadvertently contributed to the decline of Latin in diplomacy,¹⁸ as the Empire's heavy use of the language led others to step away from it, regarding it as the language of the Empire but not their own. Latin had been the main language of diplomacy and was used in both spoken negotiations and correspondence; it was

also used in legal texts and documents, such as treaties.¹⁹ The use of Latin began to decline during the seventeenth century. At the peace congress of Nijmegen in 1678/79, French was, for the first time, the primary language of negotiations; however, the text of the treaties between the Empire and France, as well as between the Empire and Sweden, was still written in Latin. Latin was also used in relations with the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The switch to French regarding legal documents occurred with the Treaty of Aachen in 1748, which was entirely in French. After 1748, even treaties between German-speaking parties, such as the Peace of Hubertusburg between Prussia and Austria in 1763, were written in French.²⁰ However, there were exceptions, and languages other than Latin and French were also sometimes used in peace treaties during the eighteenth century.²¹

This linguistic situation has often been presented as a predominance of France in early modern diplomacy from the seventeenth century onwards, with French having essentially replaced Latin gradually as the most important language of international relations in Europe. It would be expected this situation was especially true for diplomatic relations between France and other countries, in particular smaller and less powerful ones to whom France could dictate the use of its own language during negotiations. These smaller powers include the different states of the Holy Roman Empire. One would, therefore, expect communication between the states of the Empire and France to be exclusively in French, as it was both the most prestigious diplomatic language and the language of a larger and more important state. However, there were also important reasons for a state or territory, even a small and relatively powerless one, to insist on using its own language on an equal footing as that of the other party. Contemporary treatises on diplomatic languages, such as the *Abhandlung von den europäischen Hof- und Staatssprachen* by the jurist and politician Friedrich Carl von Moser, emphasised the importance of language choice in diplomacy by linking language to sovereignty. Everyone wanted to use their own official language or the language of their court to display one's rank, which in early modern Europe was not necessarily the majority language of the population nor even the native language of the prince. Insisting on the use of one's own language—or at least a neutral language, such as Latin or French, in negotiations between non-francophone powers—was a means of asserting sovereignty, whereas deferring to the other side's choice of language meant admitting defeat. However, Moser also noted there were often few formal rules regarding language choice. For correspondence, he suggested the choice of language was completely free regarding informal handwritten letters; however, for more official purposes, language choice should be dictated by the common usage during past relations between the two parties in question.²² In practice, which languages were used during diplomatic contact was sometimes in itself subject to negotiations between both sides.²³

Language choice was also limited by the education and knowledge of the diplomats. The world of high-ranking diplomats was characterised by a common culture, marked by a classical education that had been codified during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Diplomats were expected to be highly educated and to participate in the cultural and intellectual life of European elites and the Republic

of Letters. They were part of a small elite and were expected to live a lifestyle according to their rank and social standing, which generally required a personal fortune to maintain. As part of this aristocratic society, diplomats could generally understand and speak the primary international languages, Latin and French, as well as, in many cases, Italian.²⁴

Languages of Written Correspondence in the Eighteenth Century: Evidence from the French Archives

In addition to the question of which language to use during in-person meetings, the question of language usage also arose in diplomatic correspondences. For this paper, I examined the correspondence between 15 states (*Reichsstände*) of the Holy Roman Empire and the French Crown over the course of the eighteenth century. The Empire was home to a variety of *Reichsstände*, only some of which had diplomatic relations with France for which any correspondence survives. While examining the use of different languages in diplomatic relations between France and these states, I exclusively used written documents (in other words, I did not examine the language[s] used during in-person meetings). These documents represent the French side of the written records, that is, letters sent by German princes to the French and some internal documents of French diplomacy. Letters sent by the French to the different states of the Empire were not consulted. By analysing patterns of language use only on this side of the correspondence, this study focuses on the choice of language from the viewpoint of the rulers and diplomatic personnel of the Imperial States and examines which languages they chose when addressing or responding to the French Crown, its ambassadors, ministers, and other diplomatic personnel. Furthermore, this corpus enables a study of the linguistic practices of the French and, to some extent, their responses to the languages they encountered, notably regarding translations.

The correspondences in question are stored in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères or Archives diplomatiques) at La Courneuve. The documents cover the entire eighteenth century; however, for some states, the correspondence is scarce and incomplete or does not cover the entire century due to the territory in question not having had continuous diplomatic relations with France.

This study focuses on smaller and mid-sized states and, therefore, does not include the correspondence of the two most important powers within the Empire:—Prussia and the Habsburgs.²⁵ To make the study representative of these smaller and mid-sized states, different types of states were included, varying in population size, geographic location, and influence within the Empire, as well as their political structure. The states whose correspondences were examined include Imperial cities, principalities, duchies, markgraviates, and two electorates. Both secular and ecclesiastical states were included. The correspondences of the following 15 states were examined: the electorates of Cologne²⁶ and Trier,²⁷ the duchies of Arenberg,²⁸ Clèves and Berg²⁹ and Württemberg,³⁰ the prince-bishoprics of Salzburg³¹ and Würzburg,³² the principality of Anhalt-Zerbst,³³ the margraviate of

Ansbach and Bayreuth,³⁴ the landgraviate of Hesse-Cassel,³⁵ the county palatine of Zweibrücken,³⁶ the county of Wied-Neuwied³⁷ and the imperial cities of Aachen,³⁸ Nuremberg,³⁹ and Speyer.⁴⁰

The states of the Empire were not fully sovereign; they remained subject to the emperor and to the different institutions of the Empire. They were, however, generally able to conduct their own diplomatic relations without outside interference, even against the interests of the emperor. The various princes of the Empire considered themselves part of the European “society of princes”, imitating the court life of the large European powers and maintaining their own standing armies. Following the Peace of Westphalia, the more important princes sought to increase their status within European dynastic politics, whereas the smaller states, and in particular the cities, lost most of the importance they had held within the institutions of the Empire in previous centuries and were increasingly perceived as antiquated entities.⁴¹ The Imperial states had varying relations with France. Some states, mostly those in the west of the Empire, on the border with France, feared their more powerful neighbour as a potential threat to their status as members of the Empire, as they remembered the *reunions* of Louis XIV in the 1670s and 1680s. As the Empire became increasingly polarised between the Emperor and Prussia, these states did, however, mostly take the side of the Habsburgs, who were allied with France since the *renversement des alliances* of 1756.⁴²

The correspondences between these states and France contain different types of letters and documents pertaining to a variety of topics.

First, the correspondence contains letters exchanged between diplomats on the daily business of diplomacy, such as alliances, negotiations, new diplomatic staff, and military events. These comprise the majority of the corpus.

Second, there are letters written in response to dynastic events. This category includes letters of congratulation or condolence, generally written directly from one ruler to the other,⁴³ marking important events, such as births, deaths, and marriages. These letters were typically highly formal and ritualised and, therefore, display little variety, even between princes close to the French Crown, either through alliance or family relations—and those who were not. These letters place both the writer and the recipient within the early modern society of princes and were intended to both fulfil social conventions and maintain or improve relations with the French Crown.

Finally, the correspondence also contains legal documents and treaties, often related to territorial disputes and other legal matters involving the Imperial estate in question or members of its ruling family. As some of these states sought the protection of the French, they would often try to involve the French monarchy as a mediator in these disputes. In other cases, the French themselves were interested in these conflicts, seeing them as a chance to broaden their influence within the Empire.

French

The vast majority of the correspondence is in French, marking its role as the preferred language for correspondence between diplomats, especially—as in this

case—when the diplomats of one side were native French speakers. These parts of the correspondence reveal a generally good command of the French language by German-speaking diplomats or by their secretaries. Although French was found in letters from a variety of contexts, including letters written directly between princes, as well as those exchanged between diplomats, its use is particularly dominant in letters pertaining to the ‘daily business’ of diplomatic relations. In letters dealing with policy, alliances, military matters, or current events outside the dynastic sphere, French was virtually always used when addressing the French side directly. There is, however, some variation in the frequency of its usage between different Imperial estates. In some states, the entire existing correspondence is in French, notably in the cases of Anhalt-Zerbst,⁴⁴ Ansbach and Bayreuth,⁴⁵ Nuremberg,⁴⁶ Salzburg,⁴⁷ Würzburg,⁴⁸ and Wied-Neuwied.⁴⁹ It should, however, be noted that these were all relatively small states; each produced only a limited corpus of correspondence. It is also possible that smaller states were more likely to write exclusively in French; however, there are also examples of small states using other languages as well. In most states, particularly those for which a large corpus of correspondence exists, other languages were also used, particularly German and Latin.

Latin

Latin was used primarily in the direct correspondence between two sovereigns and, less frequently, in correspondence between a German prince or city and high-ranking French officials or members of the French royal family other than the monarch. Most letters written in Latin during the period examined were, however, addressed from princes directly to the French king. Some rulers employed the language more frequently than others; for example, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel sent Latin-language letters to the French king (represented, at the beginning of this period, by the regent) in 1715,⁵⁰ annually from 1717 to 1732,⁵¹ in 1744,⁵² from 1746 to 1755,⁵³ in 1757,⁵⁴ and in 1759.⁵⁵ However, Latin is almost entirely absent from the correspondence of other territories, such as in the case of Palatinate-Zweibrücken⁵⁶ or Speyer.⁵⁷ Notably, Latin was not used more frequently by ecclesiastical rulers than by secular ones, nor does religious affiliation appear to have played a role in the choice of the language used.⁵⁸ These differences between individual Imperial estates often continue even with a change in ruler, signalling the importance of custom in the choice of language, as successive princes appear to have mostly continued the linguistic practices of their predecessors, leading some states to favour Latin while others exclusively favoured French. This situation is, for example, the case of the above-mentioned correspondence of Hesse-Cassel, which has the largest number of Latin letters found across all the correspondences examined.⁵⁹ This use of Latin is present during the reigns of three Landgraves. However, Latin appears to have then been abandoned during the latter part of the century, from the reign of Landgrave Frederick II.

Latin was used in a ceremonial or dynastic context but was not a language of normal everyday business; it was clearly no longer a common language in letters exchanged between diplomats, as it had been in earlier centuries. Most of the

existing letters written in Latin concern dynastic events, such as births, deaths, and marriages within France's royal family, including the death of Louis XIV, which was the subject of a letter of condolences from the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel.⁶⁰ However, sometimes letters responding to dynastic events were also written in French, as with a 1701 letter addressed to Louis XIV from the Duke of Württemberg on the death of Philippe, duke of Orléans, the French king's brother.⁶¹ Letters addressed directly to a sovereign were more likely to be in French if they dealt with concrete matters of negotiations or current events outside the sphere of dynastic events, as seen in a letter by Charles, prince of the Palatinate to the young Louis XV in 1728.⁶² The same point applies to letters from princes to high-ranking French courtiers or officials, such as a 1742 letter from Clemens August, prince elector of Cologne, to the Cardinal de Fleury.⁶³

Latin-language letters addressed to the French king were most common at the beginning of the century, but the use of Latin in diplomatic correspondence never completely ceased until the French Revolution.⁶⁴ By the end of the century, however, French tended to be more widely used for letters of this type, especially if the sovereign writing the letter had family relations with the French royal family. This was the case of Clemens Wenceslaus of Saxony, prince elector of Trier, whose sister had married the dauphin, son of Louis XV, making Clemens Wenceslaus the uncle of Louis XVI. Several letters addressed in the 1780s to his nephew—condolences on the death of Louis XVI's aunt in 1782,⁶⁵ congratulations on the birth of the king's second son in 1785⁶⁶ and, again, condolences following the death of the dauphin in 1789⁶⁷—are entirely in French. French was, in this case, possibly seen as more appropriate when addressing one's own family and expressed closeness and familiarity.

That Latin was by far the most neutral language—being a language with no native speakers—which had been an important element in its use in diplomatic circles in earlier periods,⁶⁸ appears to have played little to no role in the choice of Latin during the eighteenth century. Perhaps Latin was no longer perceived as neutral due to its longstanding use as the official language of diplomacy in the Empire, compared with, by the eighteenth century, far more scarce use within the French administration. The Empire's insistence on the use of Latin may have led to it being perceived as the language of one of the two parties but not the other.

German

Although Latin was used in direct correspondence, German was generally avoided when directly addressing either the French king, his ministers or officials, or French diplomats, as it was not widely understood by them. Unlike in the case of Latin, German's use was not part of the customs of diplomatic relations between the French and individual Imperial estates, nor was it spoken or understood by most at the French court. However, despite its absence in direct correspondence between either party, German-language documents are found in the majority of the correspondences. As the main language of daily life in most courts, internal documents produced in most states intended primarily for members of one's own court

or administration were most often in German. Some of these internal documents were obtained by the French and sent to Versailles. How the French gained access to these types of documents remains unclear in the correspondence itself; some may have been obtained through espionage, such as private letters of high-ranking officials or even princes, whereas others were probably given deliberately to the French by the foreign court. Yet others were publicly available, such as pamphlets, legal treatises, and book excerpts, as well as proclamations or announcements made by the foreign court.

Many of these documents were related to legal disputes, particularly those pertaining to inheritance or territorial claims in which the local prince sought the support or mediation of the French, or in which the French Crown sought to intervene. They were legal texts, treaties—particularly older ones predating the widespread use of French in diplomatic circles—or *mémoires* presented by scholars defending the point of view of the local court. These types of texts were often in German, sometimes partially in Latin or bilingual. French was rarely used, reflecting the important role of Latin in the legal profession. Texts written in German were generally translated by the diplomats who obtained them, or rather by their staff.⁶⁹ These texts include, for example, a letter from the deputies to the Circle of Swabia in 1701,⁷⁰ a letter from Joseph Clemens, prince elector of Cologne to the bishop of Münster, also in 1701,⁷¹ a 1702 letter from Joseph Clemens to the elector of Trier,⁷² a 1716 edict from the bishop of Speyer,⁷³ a 1740 letter from Clemens August of Cologne to the prince elector of the Palatinate,⁷⁴ another letter from Clemens August to his brother Charles Albert of Bavaria, the future Charles VII, in 1741,⁷⁵ and a letter by the cathedral chapter of Trier to the prince elector in 1776.⁷⁶

Translations

The use of German, which officials at the French court who received the correspondence did not understand, led French diplomats to rely on translations. This was a common experience for French diplomats who, despite the predominance of their own native language in diplomacy, were still often required to work in multilingual environments and faced documents in languages that both they themselves and their superiors in France did not speak.⁷⁷ Most pieces in the correspondence originally in German were sent to France accompanied by a French translation. In contrast, Latin was generally not translated, highlighting it as still widely understood by diplomats. Occasionally, documents in German are in the correspondence without a translation. In most of these cases, it remains unclear whether they were ever translated into French or if the translation was lost or ended up in different archives than the original. The translations appear to have been made by specialised staff in service of the diplomat, probably a native speaker. Unfortunately, the identities of these translators and the circumstances of their work are unmentioned in the correspondence itself. The translation was made on site, and both the German version and the translation were sent to France. Occasionally, the original was sent with short summaries of its key points added as marginalia.⁷⁸ In other cases, the German version is missing from the Foreign Ministry's archives.

In addition to these types of German-language documents, there are examples of German being used deliberately by the French to avoid interception of correspondence or to disguise diplomatic correspondence as private: the method was chosen in a letter dated 7 April 1702, in which a French diplomat in the Electorate of Cologne sent copies of letters exchanged between the elector on the one hand and the king of Sweden and the emperor on the other. As a precautionary measure, the diplomat used the address of a banker from Hamburg whom he knew personally—and presumably trusted—and decided against sending the correspondence in French, writing, “et je l’ay fait escrire en allemand pour éviter qu’elle ne soit interceptée” (“and I had it [the letter] written in German to prevent it from being intercepted”).⁷⁹ Presumably, the diplomat thought letters in German were less noticeable and would not attract the attention of anyone attempting to intercept French diplomatic correspondence. This point illustrates that languages with little tradition of being used in French diplomatic circles presented not only challenges to the diplomats who interacted with them but also could be used to convey information more safely. Their use in the above example relied on German not being widely understood or spoken in Western Europe outside of its native areas and on it not being commonly used for diplomatic purposes in France, which enabled French diplomats to disguise diplomatic correspondence as private.

Other Languages

Languages other than French, German and Latin were rarely used; the few exceptions are letters in Italian found in the correspondence of the Electorate of Cologne and of Palatinate-Zweibrücken.⁸⁰ One of these examples is an excerpt from an Italian-language letter written by the elector of Cologne to the papal nuncio,⁸¹ which was forwarded to the French. These letters concerned matters of the Church, Italian politics, and relations with the pope.⁸² Italian was widely understood and spoken by the nobility, and the elector also had native Italian speakers—usually priests—in his service. Most of the existing Italian documents from Cologne were written during the reigns of the Prince Electors Joseph Clemens and Clemens August, indicating that, sometimes, the preference of a prince for a particular language could also play a role. Italian was used mainly by some princes with close connections to Italy or the Papal State. Although the language appears to have been understood by the French diplomats who received the Italian-language documents—no translations of any of the Italian texts were made—it was not used when directly addressing the French.

Conclusion

French was the predominant diplomatic language in the correspondence, a finding in line with its role as the primary diplomatic and international language in Europe during the eighteenth century.⁸³ However, other languages continued to be used and are also found in the correspondence. The choice of language usage was often context-dependent; for example, Latin was used for letters of congratulation or condolences sent between sovereigns, whereas French was preferred for

issues related to daily political and courtly life, indicating a perception of Latin as a language appropriate for formal purposes. German was rarely used in direct correspondence between the estates of the Empire and the French Crown, as the French side would not have understood it. However, despite the predominance of French, French diplomats needed to access German-language documents, such as internal documents of German-speaking courts; treaties unavailable in French, especially historical ones made before French became the main diplomatic language; legal documents; and publications, often on legal matters and disputes. The diplomats, therefore, needed to have documents translated, for which they relied on professional translators. That *ambassadeurs* and *ministres* rarely appeared to have understood German themselves underlines that command of a modern foreign language was not considered an important skill for the highest rank of French diplomats. It was, however, a skill that lower-ranking personnel, who would then translate the document, possessed. The readiness with which the French side was prepared to engage with German-language documents illustrates that although they may have regarded their own language as the most important on the international stage and expected it to be used in direct communication, French diplomats still worked in a highly multilingual environment and had to rely on translations. Latin also continued to be used, mostly in direct correspondence between princes, and it was widely understood by the French side, with no need to have Latin letters or other documents translated. Regarding the princes of the Holy Roman Empire, Latin was used in letters to the French king by some but not all. There is no clear pattern regarding who used which language in terms of categories such as size of the territory or religious affiliation of its rulers or population, nor depending on whether it was an ecclesiastical state or a secular one.

The choice of language appears to have relied on personal preference or proximity to the French ruler—through alliances or familial ties—as well as on custom and historical precedence, a factor highlighted by contemporary writers on diplomatic languages, such as Moser. This situation was also likely dictated by the imbalance of power between France—a major European power—and the much smaller Imperial states and cities, although other large powers also mainly used French in the same period. However, there was room for some choice on the part of the German princes and their diplomatic staff, mainly between French and Latin. Some languages—such as German, the native language of most princes in the Empire—were not considered valid choices when addressing the French directly, highlighting the heavy weight of both the French Crown and the French language and culture in Europe.

The correspondence of these states of the Holy Roman Empire with the French Crown reveals that, although French was the predominant language in relations between the Empire and France, it was not the only one. French had obtained the role of *lingua franca* in relations between the Imperial estates and France, a role uncontested by the estates themselves, who mainly used French when addressing the French monarch or his officials and diplomats. However, Latin was also relevant to these relations, illustrating that even at the height of the French language's dominance of early modern international relations in Europe, diplomacy remained multilingual.

Notes

- 1 See, in particular concerning German-speaking Europe, Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 181–182. For a critical revision of the role of the French language in 18th-century Europe, see Siouffi, “De l’« universalité » européenne du français au XVIII^e siècle”.
- 2 See Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 61–88.
- 3 Latin, Spanish and Italian were used in Westphalia and at Nijmegen; on language, communication and translations at the congress, see Braun, “Les problèmes de communication aux congrès internationaux”, 191–218; Laufs, *In viam pacis*, 376–402.
- 4 See Sauder, “Die französische Sprache in Deutschland”, 102.
- 5 See Kramer, “Französisch bei Hofe”, 209.
- 6 See Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 181.
- 7 The predominant role of French at the Prussian court has long been a central element in many studies of the usage of French by early modern elites outside of traditionally francophone areas; see for example Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, t. 8/1, 558–572. See also Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Großen*, 24–37; Wittenauer, *Im Dienste der Macht*, 113–146. See also the chapter by Tatjana Trautmann in this volume. As can be seen in the quotes by Voltaire cited below, Prussia was already perceived as particularly francophone by contemporaries.
- 8 See Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 181. Frederick demanded of the members of the Academy to only publish works in French or Latin, Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Großen*, 38.
- 9 The three questions to be considered were: “Qu’est-ce qui a rendu la langue française universelle? Pourquoi mérite-t-elle cette réputation? Est-il à présumer qu’elle la conserve?” (“What has rendered the French language universal? Why does it deserve this reputation? Is it to be expected that she will retain it?”).
- 10 Rivarol, *Discours sur l’universalité de la langue française*, 40: “Le temps semble être venu de dire le monde français, comme autrefois le monde romain [...]”. Rivarol’s assessment—particularly regarding the supposed inherent superiority of the French language—was, however, not universally accepted by his contemporaries; see Siouffi, “De l’« universalité » européenne du français au XVIII^e siècle”, 18.
- 11 Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, no. 2138, letter to the Marquis de Thibouville, October 24, 1750: “Je me trouve ici en France. On ne parle que notre langue. L’allemand est pour les soldats et les chevaux; il n’est nécessaire que pour la route. En qualité de bon patriote, je suis un peu flatté de voir ce petit hommage qu’on rend à notre patrie, à trois cents lieues de Paris”.
- 12 Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, no. 2116, letter to Mme Denis, August 24, 1750, 160–161: “La langue qu’on parle le moins à la Cour, c’est l’allemand. Je n’en ai pas encore entendu prononcer un mot. Notre langue et nos belles-lettres ont fait plus de conquêtes que Charlemagne”.
- 13 See Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 181–185.
- 14 French was, however, also used; see, for an example concerning French language in court theatre, Markovits, “L’Europe française’: une domination culturelle?”.
- 15 See Sauder, “Die französische Sprache in Deutschland”, 105.
- 16 There was, for example, a notable decline in the printing of books in Latin over the course of the early modern period in both France and the Holy Roman Empire; see Waquet, *Le latin ou L’empire d’un signe*, 102–106.
- 17 See Braun, *La connaissance du Saint-Empire en France*, 287–289.
- 18 Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, t. 8/2, 830–832.
- 19 Concerning Latin as a language of diplomacy at the beginning of the early modern period, see Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 45–46.
- 20 See Braun, *Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs*, 196; Sauder, “Die französische Sprache in Deutschland”, 102.

- 21 For examples, see Burkhardt, "Sprachen des Friedens und Friedenssprache", 8–12. German was used for the treaty of Nystad between Russia and Sweden at the beginning of the century. The language continued to be used for some treaties within the Empire, like the 1745 treaty of Füssen between Austria and Bavaria.
- 22 Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staatssprachen*, 28–37.
- 23 See Dauser, "Sprach-Verhandlungen. Sprachwahl und Mächtehierarchie".
- 24 See Bély, *L'art de la paix en Europe*, 487–488; Frey & Frey, "The Olive and the Horse".
- 25 See the chapter by Tatjana Trautmann in this volume.
- 26 Archives du ministère des Affaires Etrangères (*infra* AMAE), 26CP/49–26CP/112.
- 27 AMAE, 130CP/6–130CP/34.
- 28 AMAE, 4CP/6.
- 29 AMAE, 4CP/9.
- 30 AMAE, 141CP/11–141CP/37.
- 31 AMAE, 4CP/60.
- 32 AMAE, 4CP/65.
- 33 AMAE, 4CP/4.
- 34 AMAE, 4CP/5.
- 35 AMAE, 50CP/5–50CP/16.
- 36 AMAE, 92CP/22–92CP/131.
- 37 AMAE, 4CP/64.
- 38 AMAE, 4CP/1.
- 39 AMAE, 4CP/46.
- 40 AMAE, 122CP/2–122CP/9.
- 41 See Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 187–191, 202–203.
- 42 See Schindling, "Rheinisches Reich und Frankreich", 386–390.
- 43 Due to most of the letters kept in the French archives being copies, it is unclear whether some of them were written personally by the sovereign or by one of their secretaries and then signed by the prince.
- 44 AMAE, 4CP/4.
- 45 AMAE, 4CP/5.
- 46 AMAE, 4CP/46.
- 47 AMAE, 4CP/60.
- 48 AMAE, 4CP/65.
- 49 AMAE, 4CP/64.
- 50 AMAE, 50CP/5, fol. 200–201.
- 51 AMAE, 50CP/5, fol. 237r, 300r; 50CP/6, fol. 11r, 25r–27r, 46r, 61r, 82r, 98r, 101r, 118r, 125r, 137r, 144r–147r, 152r, 154r, 159r–160r, 167r, 177r–178r, 182r, 186r, 193r, 197r, 212r, 217r, 229r, 231r–235r, 245r, 249r, 273r–274r, 276r; 50CP/7, fol. 51r, 56r.
- 52 AMAE, 50CP/8, fol. 49r, 69r, 74r, 85r.
- 53 AMAE, 50CP/10, fol. 179r, 189r, 215r–240r, 276r, 283r; 50CP/11, fol. 4r–44r, 48r, 65r–57r, 112r, 113r, 132r, 141r, 147r, 148r, 151r, 153r, 159r, 160r, 166r, 186r, 187r, 189r, 191r.
- 54 AMAE, 50CP/11, fol. 386r, 437r–438r, 447r.
- 55 AMAE, 50CP/12, fol. 195r, 203r–204r.
- 56 AMAE, 92CP/27–92CP/36.
- 57 AMAE, 122CP/2–122CP/9.
- 58 This is notable, as Protestant courts were particularly francophone; see Petersilka, *Die Zweisprachigkeit Friedrichs des Großen*, 39.
- 59 This finding is notable, as Latin seems to have been introduced into the correspondence of Hesse-Cassel and France only in the eighteenth century. French was the main language used in earlier centuries; see for example the sixteenth-century correspondence cited in Malettke, "Zu den Beziehungen zwischen Frankreich und Hessen-Kassel", 29.
- 60 AMAE, 50CP/5, fol. 200r–201r.

- 61 AMAE, 141CP/13, fol. 151r–152r. This letter was a response to an earlier letter informing the Court of Württemberg of the Duke of Orléans's death, so the choice of language may have been dictated by the fact that the Duke of Württemberg was responding to a letter written in French.
- 62 AMAE, 92CP/36, fol. 120r–121r.
- 63 AMAE, 26CP/76, fol. 299r.
- 64 One of the last pieces of correspondence to be written in Latin in the examined corpus is a letter by the deputies to the Circle of Swabia to Louis XVI dating from May 1792: AMAE, 141CP/36, fol. 171r.
- 65 AMAE, 130CP/32, fol. 148r.
- 66 AMAE, 130CP/33, fol. 111r.
- 67 AMAE, 130CP/33, fol. 330r.
- 68 See for example, concerning the perception of Latin as a 'neutral' language of negotiations during the late medieval and the beginning of the early modern period, particularly in comparison to French, Haye, "Die lateinische Sprache als Medium mündlicher Diplomatie", 25–29.
- 69 For more details concerning translations, see below.
- 70 Translation: AMAE, 141CP/13, fol. 197; German version: fol. 198r–199r.
- 71 Translation: AMAE, 26CP/50, fol. 116r; German version: fol. 117r.
- 72 Translation: AMAE, 26CP/54, fol. 42r–44r; German version not found.
- 73 Translation: AMAE, 122CP/2, fol. 10r–12r; German version: fol. 13r–14r.
- 74 Translation: AMAE, 26CP/73, fol. 87r–89r; German version not found.
- 75 Translation: AMAE, 26CP/74, fol. 9r; German version not found.
- 76 Translation: AMAE, 130CP/29, fol. 237r–238r; German version: fol. 239r–240r.
- 77 See for example the case of foreign diplomats in Sweden presented in Holm, "Multilingual Foreign Affairs", 469–483.
- 78 See as an example, from the Württemberg correspondence: AMAE, 130CP/26, fol. 105r–106r.
- 79 AMAE, 26CP/52, fol. 249v.
- 80 AMAE, 92CP/27, fol. 29r–43r.
- 81 AMAE, 26CP/50, fol. 20r.
- 82 See for example: AMAE, 26CP/51, fol. 410r–411r.
- 83 See also the use of French by the English (AMAE, series 8CP; French is already used in the sixteenth century, see, as an example, 8CP/23) and the Spanish (AMAE, series 37CP) when addressing the French monarch or his diplomats.

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Part III

Linguistic Policies, Language Practices, and Diplomatic Careers



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5 Models and Practices of Language Use at the Peace Congresses of the Seventeenth Century

Guido Braun

One of the most important innovations in the art of peace-making in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the multilateral peace congresses that shaped European history beginning with the Peace of Westphalia. They brought together numerous parties with divergent mother tongues, state languages and court languages. Recent research has shown that language was not only an instrument, but also an object of negotiation at these peace congresses.¹ This raises the question of models and precedents for the selection of negotiating languages. This article examines this question, particularly with regard to French congress policy, because, since Ferdinand Brunot (1860–1938), linguistic research has assumed a language doctrine in French diplomacy as early as the seventeenth century. This research problem is analysed from a diachronic perspective on the basis of the peace congresses with French participation from the Peace of Westphalia to the end of the seventeenth century, with an overview of the early eighteenth century.

Overall, it should be noted that the political significance of the language issue was primarily that the use of one's own language was considered an essential feature of the sovereignty of the prince or the republic. In 1750, Friedrich Carl Moser, in his treatise *European Court and State Languages*, used this argument to justify the political and constitutional significance of the language issue:

But since crowned heads and free states, on account of their sole dependence on God the Most High, concede no further advantage among themselves than that which constitutes power and supremacy, and still further strengthens the laws of convention and treaty, but the sovereignty is common to all and is rooted in the concept of a non-submissive state; it is no wonder, then, that with the self-love that is inherent in all men, and in one nation as well as another, the effects of this extend also to the use of languages: For great lords do not easily use the language of another people, especially on those occasions when they appear as heads of their nation, or present their persons through others, and in them, in a moral way, the subjects of their kingdoms and countries. These two main cases occur in legations and treatises.²

The principle of the equality of sovereign states in the choice of language was also characteristic of the state system of the nineteenth century, as the French jurist Paul Pradier-Fodéré (1827–1904) noted:

The overriding principle is that the right of equality of States also extends to the language used by their governments in their diplomatic relations. Each sovereign State is therefore entitled to use exclusively, and to request that any language it may determine be used with it, whether that of its own country or of a foreign language, and the other States also have the right not to comply with this desire.³

However, the linguistic practice cultivated at the peace congresses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—despite the importance of sovereignty, which Moser contemporaneously emphasises—shows a reality that diverges from Pradier-Fodéré's rigid principles. This is evidenced by an event from the beginning of the Peace Congress of Westphalia, the first meeting between the imperial and Spanish ambassadors. On 8 November 1643, Isaak Volmar, who was part of the imperial delegation, reported on a visit to the Spaniards in his diary; he did so, as was customary for him, in German interspersed with Latin and Italian insertions:⁴

On Sunday, the 8th, we visited don Diego Savedra. He received us with two of his ministers at the entrance of the court and let us proceed to the lower hall, where he and conte Zapata received us and welcomed us upstairs. The visit consisted only of greetings, which the Count [of Nassau] did in French, and I seconded with a little Italian, after which the discourses in Italian and French were mixed up.⁵

Volmar succinctly sketches the dazzling multilingualism of this congress, which was attended by countless polyglot envoys from the most diverse European countries. How, though, did the choice of languages of communication and negotiation at this congress function in detail? Were there rules based on principles like sovereignty, guidelines, and agreements for mutual interaction, or was the language changed at will, as Volmar's diary seems to suggest? What models were used as a guide, and did this congress itself become a reference in hindsight? Did the subsequent multilateral peace congresses of the seventeenth century lean on the practices of the Peace Congress of Westphalia, or did the envoys in Nijmegen and Rijswijk deviate from them in a significant way?

Following earlier publications on the state of research on the languages of diplomacy in the early modern period, and especially on the linguistic situation at the Peace Congress of Westphalia and the associated translation problems and foreign experiences,⁶ this article focuses on the attitude of the diplomacy of Louis XIV of France regarding the language issue at the peace congresses of his reign. It also takes into account the Franco-German Frankfurt Conference of 1682, which was regarded as a continuation of the Nijmegen Congress, and its interpretation in historiography. During this period, it is often claimed, French supplanted Latin as the language of diplomacy. In fact, in a European diplomacy characterised by the use of several languages before 1643 as well as after 1697, the use of Molière's language increased, but without displacing Latin, which was able to assert itself

as an important language of negotiation and above all of treaty until the eighteenth century. Although a famous monograph by Marc Fumaroli uses a catchy title to describe the time when Europe spoke French (*Quand l'Europe parlait français*),⁷ it should not be forgotten—despite the undisputed widespread use of this language since the later seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries—that the actual characteristic of European history and also of European diplomacy remained multilingualism.

Regarding French diplomacy, the main question to be examined is how France legitimised its position on the language of negotiations at the peace congresses and to what extent legal arguments were used for this purpose. The starting point for these considerations is Ferdinand Brunot's thesis that Louis XIV's diplomacy in the second half of the seventeenth century developed a classical doctrine on the language question. Brunot formulated this supposed "*doctrine classique de la diplomatie française*" in 1917 in the fifth volume of his great history of the French language.⁸ Brunot's achievement, whose results subsequent language historians more or less faithfully adopted without consulting the sources themselves, should generally not be underestimated. Although Brunot is a linguistic historian, he approached the sources with a historical-critical method, which proves that he was quite familiar with historical research;⁹ his meticulousness went so far as not to rely on the editions of bilateral and multilateral peace treaties but to study the originals in the archives to determine the languages in which they were written: he checked them in the collection of the French Foreign Ministry.¹⁰ His *History of the French Language* from the first half of the twentieth century has become a *lieu de mémoire* for the French and was therefore noted in Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* in 1992.¹¹

However, did Louis XIV's diplomacy really have a veritable language doctrine and thus a systematic language policy?

The Westphalian Peace Congress Between Tradition and Innovation

To assess the attitude of the French delegation in Münster, an outline of the general linguistic customs of the Congress is necessary. Since this problem has already been addressed,¹² a summary of the basic lines will suffice here. Regarding the negotiating languages and the languages of the peace treaties, there was no generally binding rule or agreement for all negotiating strands. This is due to the structure of the Congress, which did not have any plenary sessions and instead consisted of bilateral negotiations—conducted directly or through intermediaries—in the legation quarters and in the form of a quasi-Imperial Diet, as well as in the confessional imperial bodies of the *Corpus Catholicorum* and the *Corpus Evangelicorum*.¹³ Latin, as the *lingua communis* of the Occident and the neutral diplomatic language *par excellence*, was the most important, but by no means the only language of negotiation. The Golden Bull of 1356 has already mentioned it as the language that the empire used, and it was established as its second official language alongside German in the electoral capitulation of Charles V of 1519 and the subsequent imperial electoral capitulations. At Westphalia, Latin was used to

draw up the peace treaties with France and Sweden signed on 24 October 1648.¹⁴ In contrast, the third peace treaty that the Congress produced, the Spanish-Dutch Peace of 30 January 1648, was a bilingual treaty instrument written in Dutch and French.¹⁵ In addition to Latin, French was also one of the *lingua francas* used in oral discussions and negotiations as well as in written documents at the Congress, where Italian—not least because of the mediators Chigi and Contarini—still played an important role, as did German and, to a lesser extent, Spanish and Dutch, in oral as well as written communication. The Germans themselves and the representatives of the Nordic powers mainly used German, which was therefore very widespread, especially in Osnabrück. The congressional envoys of the European powers (including the French) were accustomed to the multilingual courts of their home countries. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, Italian and Spanish, for example, were common court languages at the Louvre in addition to French. The phenomenon of multilingualism therefore corresponded entirely to the diplomats' horizon of experience. In addition, the Congress envoys were usually experienced personalities who had already been active in the Empire for years, such as the Frenchman Claude de Mesme, Count d'Avaux, or had studied there, such as the Swede Salvius, and could also draw on the linguistic staff of their legation households. Incidentally, it is well known that d'Avaux was an excellent Latinist and that his colleague Abel Servien was also aware of the importance of knowing Latin well.¹⁶ At this time, the French *noblesse de robe* was still proficient in Latin.

Although the Congress as a whole did not agree on the negotiating and treaty languages, there were bilateral agreements on the subject. The languages were not only the instrument, but also the subject of the negotiations. In some cases, emerging disputes or ambiguities were quickly resolved, especially between the Spanish and the Dutch. In general, however, the languages of the negotiations, the proxies and, finally, the ratifications were negotiated again and again throughout the Congress.¹⁷ Latin, which was common to all, still functioned as a compromise language in Westphalia.¹⁸ In this period, the existence of such a compromise language took much of the edge off the language disputes that they later possessed in the age of nationalism. Intransigence or willingness to compromise regarding languages also assumed the function of a litmus test: the will to reach a political agreement not infrequently manifested in linguistic concessions, while stubbornness on this point could be an indication of a crisis or even the imminent breakdown of negotiations. The participants were well aware of this political indicator function.¹⁹

Only the Spanish and the Dutch followed a specific written agreement, reached on 5 May 1646, concerning their use of language.²⁰ The decision was to negotiate orally in Latin, French and Dutch, but the documents were to be drawn up exclusively in French and Dutch. These two languages were in a sense also the Spaniards' own languages, as they were the administrative languages of the Netherlands (including the Spanish Netherlands).²¹ Furthermore, the Dutch were averse to Spanish because they saw in it the danger of manifesting Spanish sovereignty.²² The compromise in terms of ceremonial and languages was an expression of the political will of the Spanish to reach an armistice or peace agreement with the States General. For the Dutch, who sought to assert their sovereignty, the

recognition of their language under international law was important;²³ therefore, they also used Dutch alongside French in their dealings with the French.

Concerning the language habits among other parties who had not made a comparable agreement, a fundamental distinction must be made between oral and written language use: Oral language was flexible and ephemeral, and written language may have been accessible to contemporaries and posterity. The latter was therefore more difficult to regulate than the former. In Osnabrück, where primarily the Nordic powers (and few envoys from other European countries) met, the situation was clearer than in Münster, where Germanic and Romance native speakers came together. The Swedish government had already given its envoys instructions regarding the use of language, which posited the principle of Latinity in written negotiations but allowed greater leeway for conversations when the ambassadors were on the way to Osnabrück.²⁴ These instructions also applied the principle of accepting only Latin documents from the allied crown of France. After receiving the first letters from the French Congress's envoys in French, Oxenstierna and Salvius insisted between December 1643 and March 1644 that d'Avaux and Servien write to them in Latin in future. In this context, they argued purely pragmatically regarding Oxenstierna's and the Swedish court's lack of knowledge of French. The matter was not discussed in depth between the allied crowns during the congress, but the French side temporarily accommodated the Swedish wish for Latin correspondence and then returned to the active use of French in correspondence with the Swedish ambassadors, although they did use Latin with the Queen of Sweden. The Swedish envoys also used Latin in their letters to the French.

The French's first, very discreet attempts to establish their own language as the language of diplomacy were limited to being allowed to use French themselves, without meeting with opposition. However, the imperials formulated this opposition when the French presented their first peace proposition in French.²⁵ Even small imperial estates, though, sometimes insisted on the use of Latin. The time for persuading other states or the imperial estates to use French actively had not yet arrived—with a few exceptions.²⁶ Incidentally, the French Congress ambassadors did not see this as their goal. Their intention in the negotiations with the Emperor and the Empire was rather to be allowed to present their own propositions in French. The imperial answers were gladly accepted in Latin, which they also intended to use for the peace treaty.

On the French side, a legal report concerns the regulation of the treaty language to be sought with the imperials. Since Nicolas Doulceur, who was Godefroy's secretary at the congress, wrote it, Théodore Godefroy, the legal advisor to the French envoys in Münster, can be assumed to be its author.²⁷ The French expert's opinion reached the same conclusion as the Swedes and the Emperor's envoys: The treaty should be written in Latin. Nevertheless, Godefroy used the counter-argument that "it would do France honour to write it in French rather than in another language". Godefroy assumed, however, that in this case, the Emperor would insist on German as the second language of the treaty, and that it would be necessary to concede this to him so that France could not establish a precedent

through the use of French as one of two treaty languages. As the main reasons for using Latin, Godefroy first mentions the fact that the peace, armistice and alliance treaties between the European powers were generally written in Latin; second, this particularly applied to the French treaties with the Habsburgs, insofar as they affected regions beyond Flanders, Artois and Burgundy. Thirdly—and importantly—the German and French languages and their respective legal concepts were so different that a bilingual German-French treaty would inevitably lead to many cases of doubt. The model was therefore to be the Latin language of the Treaty of Regensburg of 1630.

This memorandum illustrates that Latin was the predominant diplomatic language for treaties, but some preliminary consideration of language use was still necessary. Godefroy's legal arguments reveal that custom guided the legal advisor. A modification of this custom in favour of both negotiating parties using French was not considered. In 1750, Friedrich Carl Moser, in his definition of the term "state-language" ("*Staats=Sprache*"), mentions two legal bases for the choice of language: first, the aforementioned custom, and second, special "treaties and conclusions" ("*Vertraege und Schluesse*"), positive law,²⁸ but he insists mainly on the former.

The two French ambassadors, d'Avaux and Servien, were hardly in agreement regarding the language issue. In the context of the prevailing personal antagonism between the two within the French delegation,²⁹ d'Avaux's preference for Latin may have persuaded Servien to promote the language whose use was, in his opinion, more worthy of the French king anyway: French.³⁰

The Franco-Spanish negotiations on the treaty languages proved particularly difficult. While the Spanish and the Dutch had already agreed on almost all substantial points, the French headmaster envoy, Longueville, was still discussing the negotiating and treaty languages with France and Spain in the spring of 1647; the negotiations were stuck on the important, substantial points.³¹ Longueville claimed³² that the earlier Franco-Spanish treaties had also been exclusively in French and that, moreover, the Spaniards had recently had them printed in French in Antwerp, presumably alluding to the edition by Jean-Jacques Chifflet of 1643 (second edition 1645).³³ Longueville thus argued on the basis of custom and believed that he had the law on his side in this respect. He did not aim to innovate, as he wrote to d'Avaux on 12 February 1647.³⁴ In a dispatch to Brienne of March 1647, the French headmaster envoy, who at the time was conducting the negotiations with the main enemy, Spain, alone, emphasised that he was not interested in giving France an advantage over Spain.³⁵

However, the Spanish countered that the exclusive use of French only applied to Vervins, and the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, not the Catholic King himself, had negotiated this treaty.³⁶ The tradition with which both the French and Spanish sides argued therefore initially required clarification; in the end, the position of the Spaniards proved correct.³⁷

A memorandum sent simultaneously to Longueville and d'Avaux on behalf of Louis XIV described the Peace of Vervins as a precedent ("*exemple*") but stressed

that French compliance with the language of negotiation and treaty should promote peace with Spain:

As for the language, although the Vervins treaty was only drawn up in French, we will disregard this example to facilitate peace and agree to two originals being made, one in French and the other in Spanish.³⁸

The French Secretary of State, Brienne, finally instructed Longueville to agree to a bilingual, French-Spanish treaty instrument because this had also been done in the past, unless it had been necessary to resort to a third (neutral) language:

[O]nce you have agreed on the terms of the contract, it is up to the contracting parties to draft it in two languages, and it is certain that this has been observed in the normal course of events, except that it was written in a third language, as was the practice in the past, and care is taken to ensure that it is faithfully explained and that there are no ambiguous terms, and to avoid surprise, everyone stipulates that the understanding will be taken from the copy he presents. In the past, the English, who usually wrote in French, and who have often written in it, added this little note that words are worth what they sound in the ordinary and common interpretation.³⁹

The Spanish recognised this bilingual principle,⁴⁰ although the necessary translations could lead to considerable delays in the negotiations,⁴¹ and the same approach was also observed in later French-Spanish negotiations. In 1682, in Frankfurt, when the French ambassadors negotiated with the envoys of the emperor and the imperial estates, the French side formulated the principle of the equal use of the languages of both negotiating partners as a model of international law.

Regarding the languages of the negotiating documents at the Peace Congress of Westphalia, the imperials and the Swedes used Latin; the French—despite the displeasure of the imperials—used French; and the Spanish *vis-à-vis* the French used Spanish. The mediators often noted oral proposals in Italian; they heard them in French and Spanish and later translated them into Latin if necessary.⁴²

Ultimately, concerning the position of the Peace of Westphalia within the historical development of diplomatic languages, the efforts of the Congress envoys to orient themselves based on models (whether Vervins, the use of language in the Roman Curia⁴³ or similar precedents) testify to the influence of tradition on this Congress, which essentially combined earlier lines of tradition and selectively developed them further to apply them to a new situation.

According to legal treatises and writings on the art of negotiation, the Congress of Westphalia became the linguistic model for the following century. This is how Friedrich Carl Moser later described it.⁴⁴ However, a more precise examination of the vast body of documents from the period in question would be necessary to determine whether this assessment is generally accurate. Regarding French congress policy, this question should first be explored through an analysis of the Nijmegen Congress.

Questioning the Westphalian Model at Nijmegen

In his contribution on papal peace mediation in Nijmegen, Rietbergen states:

The congresses of Munster and Osnabrück have been called the laboratory of the theorists of international law, and indeed, a great number of ideas of diplomatic procedure, which had been more or less put into practice in the 15th and 16th centuries, were, by their acceptance at Munster, definitely enshrined in the corpus of empirical data which scholars began to use in their text-books—and stored in the powder-flask of precedents, which diplomats used in their battles at the following congresses.⁴⁵

Did Nijmegen follow the linguistic habits of the Peace Congress of Westphalia, as Rietbergen suggests?

The Nijmegen Peace Congress also brought together several multilingual envoys, many of whom mastered French. However, due to largely ungeneralisable and wrongly contextualised sources—especially the history of the Nijmegen Peace Congress, which Saint-Didier published as early as one year after the conclusion of peace, in 1680⁴⁶—some researchers have overestimated the importance of French as a language of negotiation.⁴⁷ Brunot himself concludes that the linguistic habits in Nijmegen had not changed fundamentally since the Peace Congress of Westphalia. Brunot notes that Saint-Didier—contrary to the accounts of later historians and linguists—never claims that French was the official language of the Congress.⁴⁸ The core of Saint-Didier's observations, an eyewitness to the events, is likely the conspicuously increasing spread of the command of French among European diplomats and its use in social contacts, while there is no question of a general use of French as the language of negotiations.

Despite the progress of French among the foreign envoys, the French negotiators themselves stressed to the English mediators, notably Temple, that their knowledge was by no means equal to that of a native French speaker. They therefore refused to recognise a common form that the mediators presented for the proxies of the delegations represented in Nijmegen because it contained deficiencies in diction and substance.⁴⁹

The language of the plenipotentiaries' proxies was also at issue. Denmark did not want to accept the French-language full powers of Louis XIV's envoys and insisted on Latin—otherwise, they would present their own proxy in Danish.⁵⁰ The French plenipotentiaries countered that they had already presented their full powers in French on previous occasions;⁵¹ if the Danish representative proved them wrong, he might hand them his own full powers not only in Danish, but even in Hebrew. The Danish envoy first insisted that Latin should be regarded as the *lingua communis*, that any previous French proxies had not been issued in accordance with the rules and that the Danish kingship had meanwhile become hereditary, and the king ruled his kingdom more absolutely than any other ruler. According to the Danish envoy, this absolute rule gave his king all the more right to insist on Latin full powers. Power was thus equated with justified language claims. The Danish envoy therefore refused to make custom the guiding principle, especially given the

procedural innovations in the past twenty years, and insisted on complete equality of status between France and his country.⁵² According to the English mediators, he proved particularly adamant on this point.⁵³ However, since the allies, especially the Dutch (and, according to the French account, also the mediators) did not support Denmark, and since its congress representative was moreover unable to produce evidence of earlier Latin proxies of French legations *vis-à-vis* Denmark, France prevailed. The English mediator Temple interpreted the Danish concession as a failure of the attempt to assert the equal status of the crowned heads.⁵⁴ However, Temple had obtained French consent to make the offer to the Danish ambassador that a reservation of rights be drawn up designating that the language in the proxies was not authoritative for future negotiations.⁵⁵ The French ambassadors ultimately refused to even formally respond to the Danish proposal.⁵⁶

Regarding the formalities of the Franco-Imperial and Franco-Spanish negotiations, the French envoys in Nijmegen, as they reported to Louis XIV in February 1677, recalled the Congress of Münster, the Peace of the Pyrenees and the Peace of Aachen with Spain, as well as the custom of the earlier treaty negotiations with the Emperor.⁵⁷

Where no convention existed because the powers concerned had not yet been in peace negotiations with each other, the negotiating partners were free, in France's view, to coordinate their negotiating languages freely with each other, like Spain and Sweden. However, the French emphasised that there was an established custom for the Franco-Danish negotiations. They referred to the tradition or, more precisely, the "*long usage*" (in French terms) as the only rule according to which such disputes could be decided.⁵⁸ On the basis of this tradition and customary law (French: "*usage*" and "*coûture*") as the only authoritative legal basis ("*l'unique règle*"), Louis XIV himself rejected the Danish demand as an "innovation" ("*nouveauté*"),⁵⁹ referring to the earlier treaties and their corresponding proxies.⁶⁰ On 5 March 1677, his envoys reported to Louis XIV on the resolution of almost all disputes concerning the full powers, summarising that all parties had bowed to custom ("*usage*").⁶¹ Even if they ultimately prevailed, the sharp north wind of the Danish demands initially brought the sea voyage of their peace negotiations to a standstill, as the French envoys metaphorically put it.⁶²

It thus follows from the French congress records that the language issue was certainly contentious in the negotiations, and communication did not proceed as smoothly as it did in social intercourse.

As in Münster, the imperial envoys presented their negotiating documents to France in Latin, while the French used their mother tongue. In the oral negotiations, Leopold I's representatives insisted that both parties use Latin. This is evident from a protocol they made regarding a conversation with the French in the quarters of the English mediator. This protocol was consulted again in Rijswijk and was printed in the edition of documents on the Peace of Rijswijk that appeared shortly afterwards. The mediator greeted them in French, the imperial envoys reported, and apologised for using this language after having answered him in Latin. For his part, Marshal d'Estrades apologised for not being able to speak Latin because he had devoted himself to military service since his youth. It is evident

that Latin—which the two French plenipotentiaries in Westphalia, who came from the *noblesse de robe*, knew well—was less widespread in the seventeenth-century *noblesse d'épée*, and Nimègue reveals the decline of Latin skills among the French aristocracy in general. In fact, Colbert also claimed that he was no longer as proficient in the language as he had been in the past, but he conceded that “usage” required its use in Franco-Imperial negotiations. The emperor’s envoys insisted on their Latinity according to custom.⁶³ At this point, on the French side, there were practical reasons to reject Latin as a language of negotiations, but not yet as a language of treaties; the speed with which knowledge could be applied was lacking, but not a basic understanding of the written language.

The signing of the French-Imperial Peace took place on 5 February 1679. It was written in Latin. The imperial plenipotentiaries signed first, in the right-hand column. Regarding the language of the treaty, their French counterparts had previously obtained Louis XIV’s consent. On 8 November 1678, the French envoys had designated Latin as the “natural” language of the Roman King. In this context, the “Roman King” obviously did not mean the Emperor’s successor, but the Emperor himself; this term was more apt in the context of the French envoys’ argumentation. They added the following qualification to their comments on the language of the treaty: “[I]t can be argued that we can draw up our copy in French because the Latin language is to be regarded as the natural language of the Roman king”.⁶⁴ Louis XIV replied to his plenipotentiaries that he wanted to grant the Emperor the privilege of concluding a treaty in Latin because his predecessors had done the same. “Greatness” and “power” were clearly connected with the French crown, while in Germany, only their appearance was to be found.⁶⁵ As far as the concept of “natural language” is concerned, the examples of the sources cited show that it is neither clearly linked to sovereignty nor to proto-national identity, nor even a fixed reference language on the German side (the “natural language” of the Germans is sometimes identified with the scholarly language Latin, and sometimes, as we shall see below, with vernacular German). What all references to the French “natural” language have in common, however, is that they reject subordination to another language, thus implicitly operating with sovereignty in this sense. Further, for France, they also draw on a proto-national identification with French that was tangible since the sixteenth century.

Nevertheless, as the congresses of Münster/Osnabrück and Nijmegen show, there was no sophisticated, systematically developed doctrine for determining the languages of negotiations on either side—not even among the French.⁶⁶ The generally accepted guiding principle was the (often ambivalent) convention of international law. At the peace congress of Nijmegen, however, there is evidence for the first time of a natural law justification according to which each country had to use its “natural” (mother) language. This concept of “natural” language had not yet played a role among the French diplomats of 1644–1649. Since Nijmegen, however, there was a tendency on the French side to turn away from the principle of using the neutral *lingua communis*, Latin, in favour of the bilingual principle (already common between France and Spain)—that is, using the languages of both negotiating parties. This principle of bilingualism played a prominent role in the

French negotiations in Frankfurt which were conceived as the continuation of the Nijmegen Congress.

The Frankfurt Language Controversy—A Myth?

As in 1648, the French envoys at the Frankfurt Congress in 1682—a diplomatic event which, according to Moser, was the most important language dispute between Germans and French in history⁶⁷—did not start from a language doctrine that aimed to impose the active use of French as a diplomatic *lingua communis* on the other party, that is, on the emperor and the Empire. However, after the first discreet approaches in Nijmegen, in 1682, the Frenchmen vehemently asserted their right to use French themselves as the “natural” language of their king, and they firmly rejected Latin as *lingua communis*. In Frankfurt, an extraordinary imperial deputation negotiated with the French ambassadors Melchior de Harod de Saint-Romain and Nicolas-Auguste Harlay about, among other things, the “réunions” and the French annexation of Strasbourg. Both parties took the view that these negotiations should be regarded as a continuation of the Congress of Nijmegen in terms of procedure. Nevertheless, the emperor’s and the imperial estates’ representatives insisted more resolutely than at the peace congresses on the principle of conducting negotiations in Latin, because otherwise—they feared—France, which usually maintained an envoy in Regensburg in times of peace, might want to use French at the Diet in future. Unlike in Nijmegen, negotiations in Frankfurt were conducted without intermediaries; the use of language in direct negotiations was less arbitrary, and the Frenchmen’s use of Latin was therefore desirable from the Imperial point of view, especially when it came to the internal affairs of the Empire.⁶⁸ In the end, a problem that had been postponed in Münster and Nijmegen came to light here. Both parties thought that custom was on their side: the French envoys had used their mother tongue in earlier negotiations with the emperor, and the Empire and believed that this legitimised them. On the other hand, one could argue that the emperor and the Empire had not recognised this use and had even protested against it.

Although Brunot’s account is generally reliable, on the subject of these negotiations, it is inaccurate in almost all important respects.⁶⁹ Firstly, he is likely mistaken with regard to the attribution of an anonymous memorandum to the French negotiators Saint-Romain and Harlay, which they allegedly submitted to the Imperial Directory and is discussed in more detail below. Secondly, through a meaning-distorting abridgement in a quotation from an imperial document, Brunot misrepresents the Emperor’s negotiating position on the language question, which seemed quite intransigent to Brunot but, in fact, “in the fatherland’s present state of distress” (“*bey des Vatterlands jezigem Nothstand*”, as the imperials put it), endeavoured to achieve a justifiable agreement.⁷⁰ Thirdly, contrary to his assertion, which is based on another erroneous source quotation from a memorandum by Le Dran,⁷¹ there was no Franco-German agreement at all in Frankfurt on the problem of whether to negotiate either in Latin or in German and French.⁷² Fourthly, Brunot’s comments on the consequences of this alleged agreement are therefore obsolete. In fact, until

the dissolution of the assembly, the emperor's representatives presented their pleas to the French unchanged, in Latin, and on 14 December 1682, they complained to the deputation of the imperial estates about

the innovation [desired by France] that they should not negotiate in Latin but in French, which has never been raised before and is contrary to the well-known way of negotiating between the Empire and foreign powers.⁷³

Fifthly, the French envoys were not primarily concerned with presenting their "*doctrine*" on the language question, but their dilatory treatment of this problem served other, political considerations. At the time, the French government actually intended to delay the Frankfurt negotiations.⁷⁴ Furthermore, it seems daring to deduce a doctrine of French diplomacy mainly from an anonymous memorandum whose reception is unknown. Brunot's erroneous account has nevertheless had a lasting influence on later research, which has not verified it in the archival documents.⁷⁵

The aforementioned French memorandum of 20 June 1682 is based on the premise that each nation has the freedom to use its "natural languages" ("*langues naturelles*").⁷⁶ Unlike Godefroy before 1648, it advocates negotiating bilingually, using German and French rather than Latin in Franco-German relations. The customs between France and Spain are highlighted as a model of this bilingual principle.

Excerpts of the memorandum from 1682 have been published on various occasions, but with a dubious attribution to the French envoys to the Frankfurt Congress, Saint-Romain and Harlay, and with the unsubstantiated claim that it was submitted to the Imperial Directory. In fact, there is no indication at all in the text that it was officially submitted; the text is anonymous, and in the non-edited part, it contains trivial or even tendentious statements for German ears, which make submission to the Imperial Directory very unlikely.⁷⁷ It is more likely that it is an internal memorandum from the perimeter of the embassy or of the French government.⁷⁸ Despite these limitations, it largely corresponds to the position of the French negotiators with regard to the Frankfurt language dispute. However, praised for its alleged clarity as a high point of French diplomacy in the seventeenth century, it contains a grotesque error in the unedited part: in order to question the Latin tradition of the Empire and to prove that it was proper for the Empire to negotiate in German (as its "natural" language) rather than in Latin, the author(s) claim that there is no indication in the Golden Bull that Latin was used as a language in imperial affairs in the fourteenth century. They quote precisely the passage where Latin is mentioned and translate the decisive term "*grammatica*" next to the Latin quotation not with Latin, but with "*langue germanique*".⁷⁹ Moser rightly remarks in 1750:

The Latin language has remained the mother tongue and actual language of the Germans in their dealings with foreign free peoples and with those of their own members who otherwise use a language other than the German language in their common life and dealings.⁸⁰

On 14 April 1682, when the imperial representatives Rosenberg and Stratmann protested against the French-language proposition of the ninth of that month, noting that Latin corresponded to the "*stilus tractandi*" with foreign powers, they obviously did so in the knowledge that they were using a universal language.

However, it was not only in the French memorandum described above that Louis XIV's diplomats presented a different view. Moser summarises their response to the imperial protest regarding the language of the French proposition with the statement, "nevertheless Latin has to be regarded as the vernacular of the [Holy] Roman Empire".⁸¹

As early as 1678, as we have seen, the French Congress envoys designated Latin as the "natural" language of the Roman King. At Frankfurt, two opposing principles were used in the international law of the seventeenth century to determine the languages of negotiations: firstly, the principle of using a third, neutral language that the emperor's envoys advocated; secondly, the principle of using the languages of both powers involved ("*langues naturelles*"). This contrast has not yet been elaborated in research as a characteristic of the Frankfurt negotiations.⁸² However, the recourse to "natural languages" instead of customary international law constituted a veritable paradigm shift in French diplomacy's legal legitimisation of the negotiating languages.⁸³

The undermining of the neutrality of Latin, which the French reiterated in this context as the language of a negotiating party, the Empire, may have contributed to its decline as a diplomatic *lingua franca*, which was largely completed in the second third of the eighteenth century, despite continued resistance in some cases.⁸⁴ In fact, at precisely the moment that the imperial electoral capitulations from Charles V confirmed the use of Latin in the Empire, a move away from Latin as the language of justice and administration occurred in France. The *ordonnance* of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539, which prescribed the use of the vernacular in court, contributed to the displacement of Latin in France,⁸⁵ although it remained the language of school and university education. This was obviously accompanied by a cultural change that made Latin a foreign language that was no longer regarded as a supranational and thus neutral means of communication.

Nevertheless, even after 1682, the construction of a veritable French language doctrine must be relegated to the realm of myth-making.⁸⁶ While Saint-Romain and Harlay—following the example of Münster and Nijmegen—insisted on being allowed to use French in Frankfurt, the French Resident at the Imperial Diet conceded that the convention in Regensburg clearly favoured Latin,⁸⁷ and he successfully complained in 1684 that the emperor's representative (the Imperial *Concomissarius*) had presented him with a document in German, whereupon he immediately received a Latin version.⁸⁸ In addition to the arguments already mentioned that oppose a uniform French doctrine, another instructive example provides evidence of the heterogeneity of French positions on the language question. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, François de Callières, in his work on the art of

negotiating (*L'Art de négocier*), the most successful treatise on diplomacy of the early modern period, refers to the universal role of Latin:

Any subject destined to be employed in the negotiations for the service of the King must learn German, Italian and Spanish, along with Latin, which it would be dishonouring to ignore for a man committed to public service, as this is the common language of all the Christian nations.⁸⁹

Callières, who saw Latin not as the language of the Holy Roman Empire, but of the Christian West *par excellence*, represented France at the Peace Congress of Rijswijk.

The Traditions in Rijswijk and the Ambiguity of the Language Question in the Dawning Eighteenth Century

As a scholarly language, French had made considerable progress in the second half of the seventeenth century. The history of the Congress of Rijswijk nevertheless proves that the often-polyglot envoys willingly used several languages, as had already been the case in Münster and Osnabrück and then in Nijmegen.

The Congress of Rijswijk resulted in four treaties. The French plenipotentiaries Nicolas Auguste de Harlay Bonneuil, Louis Verjus de Crécy and François de Callières concluded a treaty in Latin with England that Sweden brokered on 20 September 1697. Their peace with Emperor Leopold I, signed on 30 October 1697, was also written in Latin. In contrast, French was used as the treaty language in the agreements that France concluded with Spain and the States General on 20 September of the same year.⁹⁰

Regarding the choice of language in the written documents presented during the negotiations, the Imperial and French envoys followed the procedure established in Münster and Nijmegen: The imperials presented their negotiating documents in Latin, while the French presented theirs in French. After the imperial estates expressly asked them to do so on 2 August 1697,⁹¹ the emperor's representatives protested against the use of French in their reply to the French draft treaty of 20 July three days later.⁹²

In 1714, an Imperial-French peace treaty was concluded in French for the first time in Rastatt. Even with the Peace of Rastatt, however, France did not proceed on the basis of a language doctrine. As is well known, Louis XIV had explicitly instructed the French envoy in Rastatt, Marshal Villars, to agree to the conclusion of a Latin treaty, and the fact that it was ultimately signed in French was due solely to the fact that they did not want to lose time by calling in linguistic staff who would have had to be brought in from far away.⁹³ A few months later, the Treaty of Baden reverted to Latin.⁹⁴ Rastatt therefore does not mark a caesura, but rather a transitional period with regard to the treaty languages between France and the Emperor and Empire. The Vienna Preliminary Peace of 1735 was written in French, but the Definitive Peace of 1737/1738 in Latin. It was not until the Peace of Aachen of 1748 that the Emperor and France finally switched to the French

language in treaties, and the legal reservations in favour of the continued obligatory use of the Latin language, customary in treaties signed in French from Rastatt until the Vienna Final Act of 1815, became a mere formality. In 1714, however, the reservation of rights was by no means understood in this way. Furthermore, only the emperor's envoy signed the treaty of Rastatt, which was not concluded in the name of the Empire; therefore, it was merely a preliminary treaty that the treaty of Baden definitively confirmed for the Empire the same year.

However, differences in language usage were by no means confined to the Empire and the French; they also existed between the latter and the English. In this context, the way in which the English envoys justified using the Latin language in the Congress regulations of Cambrai in 1724 is revealing. It proves that, even in the mid-1720s, French was not yet considered the typical language of congress. The French plenipotentiaries in Cambrai reported the English opinion to their government in April 1724, namely, "that the police regulations issued at other congresses have always been drawn up in Latin, as the common language, and the ordinary language of congresses, and not in the language of the country where they were held".⁹⁵ The imperial envoys, for their part, had previously explained to the French that they could not receive any documents—not even congress regulations—in a language other than Latin.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the French representatives drafted regulations in their own language.⁹⁷ The English, on the other hand, insisted on a Latin original. In Nijmegen, Rijswijk and Utrecht, there had been no Dutch congress regulations, they objected to the French request.⁹⁸ The acceptance of the French language in English diplomatic correspondence—and even at formal audiences at the British court—did not prevent the English from demanding the use of Latin in another negotiating context, that is, at an international congress.

The French envoys sent their government a printed copy of the French and Latin Congress Regulations registered at the Cambrai Town Hall by special courier, stressing that they considered the French version to be the veritable original. To be sure, the English could claim that the Latin text was authoritative. Precisely for this reason, however, the compromise reached was acceptable to all sides. The French plenipotentiaries asked Versailles to agree to the public announcement of the regulations, noting that the imperials would reject a non-Latin regulation and that the English were also completely averse to an exclusively French congress regulation.⁹⁹

The French Congress plenipotentiaries had first reported in their memorandum for Louis XV of 6 April that they were working on a French translation of Congress regulations which contained very few changes compared to the regulations previously adopted at Rijswijk and Utrecht.¹⁰⁰ In a vehement statement, Morville had thereupon firmly rejected a Latin version as contrary to every rule and custom.¹⁰¹ However, after the French envoys explained to him in obliging terms that custom was definitely in favour of the English (and the Imperials), the French government relented.¹⁰² Morville even authorised the envoys to submit only the Latin version to the Imperials for their negotiation protocol if this concession was not recorded in writing.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Thus, even in the 1720s, the use of the French language in diplomacy was still a political issue that met with opposition. In the judgement of the jurist Friedrich Carl Moser, the political significance of the language question, as we have seen, consisted primarily in the fact that the use of one's own language was regarded as an essential feature of the sovereignty of the prince or the republic. In this sense, the use of Dutch and French (as well as the associated exclusion of Spanish) in the Spanish-Dutch negotiations should be seen as a sign of the sovereignty of the Dutch Republic *vis-à-vis* Spain. For the French, however, the guiding concept of the honour ("*honneur*") of their king, which was increased by the use of the French language, as Godefroy put it in Münster, was more important than sovereignty in the period under study here. However, enforcing this honour through the use of French met resistance from the powers who either generally invoked a tradition to the contrary, such as the Imperials in favour of Latin, or a specific line of tradition regarding the languages of Congress, such as the English, who were open to French in principle but did not consider it an established general language of Congress.

However, the replacement of Latin with French as the first diplomatic language was less due to an active language policy than to France's increasing cultural prestige and the role of French as an international language and one of numerous publications which were also published outside France. It was also related to the change in language skills, with a decrease in proficiency in Latin, starting with the French envoys, and an increasing general mastery of French among nearly all delegations. The decline in knowledge of Latin and the openness to French first affected oral negotiations, which were not as symbolically charged as written negotiations; next, the written negotiations were affected, followed by the treaties, which were the most expressive and, at the same time, the most regulated document forms. This development occurred in the context of a fundamentally multilingual Congress diplomacy that did not necessarily exclude the predominance of a particular language. Changes on the practical level were not least due to changing cultural parameters and practical necessities, while on the normative level, we must assume competing and ultimately insufficiently elaborated models. The congresses of the second half of the century show that more and more envoys had a very good command of French—and therefore liked to use it, at first more in social intercourse,¹⁰⁴ then also in negotiations, and finally in treaties. French became all the more freely accepted as a diplomatic language, even for official documents, the more it was perceived—like Latin before it—not as the language of a nation, but as an idiom common to the European cultural sphere, more an instrument than an object of negotiation—as a "*langue tierce par excellence*", as Pradier-Fodéré put it in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵

Notes

- 1 Cf. in particular Braun, "Une tour de Babel?". I would like to thank Mary Robitaille very much for proofreading my English text.
- 2 Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 5; all translations of quotations were made by the author. On Moser, see Braun, "Frédéric-Charles Moser"; Schmidt-Rösler, "Friedrich Carl von Mosers Abhandlung".

- 3 Translated from French: Pradier-Fodéré, *Cours de droit diplomatique* II, 459–460 note 1 (text first published in the *Courrier diplomatique* of 31 January 1872). Pradier-Fodéré adds: “This is why Latin—a dead language—was admirably suited, by virtue of its neutrality, to play the role of a common idiom, not to mention its precision, which makes it the scientific language *par excellence*”.
- 4 This diary has been published: *APW*, III C 2.
- 5 Translated from German: *APW*, III C 2/1, 19.
- 6 Braun, “Une tour de Babel ?”; Braun, “Fremdsprachen als Fremderfahrung”; Braun, “Les problèmes de communication aux congrès internationaux”.
- 7 Fumaroli, *Quand l’Europe parlait français*.
- 8 Brunot’s monumental work *Histoire de la langue française* was published in 1906–1948 in 13 volumes and 20 parts and was reprinted in 1966–1968.
- 9 His comments on the Peace Congress of Westphalia and on Nijmegen are indeed very accurate and correct. However, his comments on the Frankfurt negotiations in 1682 are quite wrong (cf. below), and his account of Rijswijk is rather superficial.
- 10 Cf. on the languages of diplomacy and on the contractual languages of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, vols. V, 387–431 and VIII/2, 799–837.
- 11 Cf. Chevalier, “L’*Histoire de la langue française* de Ferdinand Brunot”.
- 12 Braun, “Verhandlungssprachen”.
- 13 The complexity of the negotiations is illustrated by the diagram in Bosbach, “Gedruckte Informationen für Gesandte auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongreß”, 60.
- 14 The peace treaties with France and Sweden are published in *APW*, III B 1/1.
- 15 Dutch text of the Spanish-Dutch Peace: Smit, *Het vredesverdrag van Munster*, 30–60.
- 16 For d’Avaux, see Waquet, *Le latin ou l’empire d’un signe*, 122; for Servien, see Braun, *La connaissance du Saint-Empire en France*, 219.
- 17 Only six days before the signing of the treaty in Münster did Servien concede to have the French ratification published in Latin; cf. *APW*, III C 2/2, 1154 under 18 October 1648: The estates assembled in the bishop’s court at Münster indicated to the imperial envoys “that Servient ha[d] taken on the task of publishing the French ratification in Latin”.
- 18 Cf. Waquet, *Le latin ou l’empire d’un signe*, 305–306.
- 19 In the files examined, however, no confessional arguments are cited in the choice of a particular language for negotiations.
- 20 The Spanish-Dutch agreement on the general principles of negotiation, on ceremonial and on the question of language has survived in copy: *La Courneuve, Ministère des Affaires étrangères* (hereafter cited: AMAE), Correspondance politique (hereafter: CP) Munster 1, fol. 21r–21v; *Institut de France, Collection Godefroy* (hereafter: IF, CG) 87, fol. 396r–397r; published in: Aitzema, *Historia Pacis*, 376.
- 21 On the linguistic-legal situation in the Spanish and Austrian Netherlands, see Nicklas, “Praxis und Pragmatismus”.
- 22 Laufs, *In viam pacis*.
- 23 On the Dutch position, cf. Bäte, “Die Stadt Osnabrück während der Verhandlungen”, 69; Laufs, *In viam pacis*.
- 24 Text of the Swedish main instruction: *APW*, I/1, no. 17; on the negotiating and treaty languages: Articles 27 and [53].
- 25 Cf. Dickmann, *Der Westfälische Frieden*, 214; *APW*, III C 2/1, 452–453 under 16 October 1645: Volmar reports on a visit of the imperial envoys to the mediators, in which they presented to them the emperor’s proposals for the promotion of peace in Italian (“sermone Italico proposuimus”) and added: “Thereupon we have also further indicated that it would be very dear to Your Imperial Majesty that the French were reminded to hand over their future declarations in Latin, as this was also done in the peace negotiations of Regensburg, and if this were done, the translation would be dispensed with, and the unequal interpretations resulting therefrom would also be

avoided". The French also met with resistance from the Strasbourg envoy Markus Otto when they tried to entice him to use their language by pointing out that French was known in his home town; the representative of the city, however, used Latin because the people of Strasbourg, as native speakers of German, generally spoke German and accepted Latin as an (international) *lingua franca*; see Katterfeld, *Die Vertretung Straßburgs auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongreß*, 12.

- 26 The insistence of the imperial estates on the use of Latin by the French, especially at the Diet, in the century after the Peace of Westphalia is reported in detail by Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 325–390.
- 27 The French memorandum titled "*Que le traité de paix entre l'Empereur et le Roy se doibt plustost faire en langue latine que en [sic] langue françoise*" can be consulted in: IF, CG 22, fol. 90r–91v. In the following, quotations from the text are based on this copy.
- 28 Translated from German: "By the languages of the state I mean those languages which sovereign states and rulers, and their envoys, either freely use in written acts and in oral conversations and lectures, or which, by force of convention, as well as special treaties and contracts, must be used"; Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 2–3.
- 29 Cf. Tischer, *Französische Diplomatie*, 127–157.
- 30 Nevertheless, Servien did not go so far as to misjudge the realities; when his confidant La Court was appointed French Resident in Osnabrück, he recommended that he use the journey to practise Latin, since he would often need it at the conferences; cf. Servien to La Court, [Münster] 1646 July [7]: *APW*, II B 4, no. 58.
- 31 Tischer, *Französische Diplomatie*, 390–396; Braun, "Einleitung", CXXX–CXXXVIII.
- 32 Cf. Longueville to [d'Avaux], Münster 1647 February 12: *APW*, II B 5/1, no. 119.
- 33 Chifflet, *Recueil des traittez de paix*. This collection originally contained the treaties concluded by France and Spain in 1526–1611 and was intended to serve the Spanish envoys in Münster for their negotiations with France; cf. Toscano, *Storia dei trattati e politica internazionale*, 64 (the 3rd edition of 1669 is erroneously dated 1664 there).
- 34 Translated from French: "I replied that the previous treaties had been drawn up in French, and that the Spanish themselves had recently had them printed in Antwerp in that language alone; that nothing should be changed in the usual form"; Longueville's reply to Dutch Interpositor Pauw's request whether he would accept Peñaranda's peace proposals in Spanish; summarised in *APW*, II B 5/1, no. 119, 581–582, here 582.
- 35 Translated from French: "I replied that we did not wish to take any advantage over them in this matter, but that it was also not necessary to change anything in what is customary; that the previous treaties were drawn up in French only, and that the Spaniards themselves have recently had a whole volume printed in Antwerp which is all in our language"; Longueville to Brienne, Münster 1647 March 4: *APW*, II B 5/1, no. 155, 729–732, here 731.
- 36 On the Spanish reaction cf. Longueville to Brienne, Münster 1647 March 4: *APW*, II B 5/1, no. 155.
- 37 Brienne to Longueville, Paris 1647 March 15; French copy: AMAE, CP All. 99, fol. 152r–153v, quotation fol. 152; print of a Spanish translation: *Colección de documentos inéditos*, 192–195.
- 38 Translated from French: Memorandum of Louis XIV for Longueville and d'Avaux, Paris 1647 March 15: *APW*, II B 5/2, no. 177, 827–835, here 832.
- 39 Translated from French: Brienne to Longueville, Paris 1647 March 15; French copy: AMAE, CP All. 99, fol. 152r–153v, quotation fol. 152; printed Spanish translation: *Colección de documentos inéditos*, 192–195.
- 40 The Spanish recognition of the principle of bilingualism is already evident from the fact that they presented their draft of the Franco-Spanish treaty on 24 February 1647 in Spanish and French; print of a French-Spanish synopsis of this text: *Negotiations Secretes* IV, 224–233.

- 41 Braun, "Französisch und Italienisch als Sprachen der Diplomatie"; Braun, "Das Italienische in der diplomatischen Mehrsprachigkeit".
- 42 Braun, "Une tour de Babel ?"; Braun, "Doctrine"; Laufs, *In viam pacis*.
- 43 On the Curia as a model for the ceremonial at the Peace Congress of Westphalia, cf. Servien to Brienne, Münster 1644 April 9: *APW*, II B 1, no. 37; Brienne to French plenipotentiaries, Paris 1644 May 28: *APW*, II B 1, no. 117.
- 44 Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen* chose the Congress as the chronological starting point for his reflections on the court and state languages; cf. also Braun, "Frédéric-Charles Moser".
- 45 Rietbergen, "Papal Diplomacy", 30.
- 46 [Limojon de Saint-Didier], *Histoire des négociations de Nimegue*.
- 47 Höynck, *Frankreich und seine Gegner auf dem Nymwegener Friedenskongreß*; Neveu, "Nimègue ou l'art de négocier"; Roelofsen, "Von Nimwegen (1676–79) bis Utrecht (1712–13)"; Hatton, "Nijmegen and the European Powers".
- 48 Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, vol. V, 406–407.
- 49 Cf. French Ambassadors to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1676 December 29; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* I, 403–410, especially 406.
- 50 Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* I, 231.
- 51 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1677 February 5; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 86–90, here 87–88.
- 52 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1677 February 9; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 92–96, here 94.
- 53 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1677 February 12; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 102–104, here 103.
- 54 Cf. Temple, *Memoires*, 274–276.
- 55 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Pomponne, [Nijmegen] 1677 February 12; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 105–106, here 105.
- 56 Cf. their above-mentioned letter to Louis XIV of 1677 February 9; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, here 94–95; they concluded "that when Denmark had won ten times as many battles as it had lost, we would not allow it to introduce anything new here to our detriment, and that we would wait very patiently for its Ambassador to come to his senses". Translated from French.
- 57 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1677 February 5; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 86–90, here 89.
- 58 Cf. their above-mentioned letter to Louis XIV of 1677 February 5; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, here 89.
- 59 Cf. Louis XIV to French ambassadors in Nijmegen, Saint-Germain-en-Laye 1677 February 18; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 108–110, here 109.
- 60 Cf. Louis XIV to the French ambassadors in Nijmegen, Saint-Germain-en-Laye 1677 February 25; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 126–129, here 126.
- 61 Cf. French ambassadors in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1677 March 5; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 145–148, here 145.
- 62 Cf. their above-mentioned letter to Pomponne of 1677 February 9; Estrades, *Lettres et negociations* II, 97–98.
- 63 Cf. the French translation "Du Protocole de Nimègue touchant les entrevües, & la Langue en laquelle l'on devoit traiter": *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 20–22; the Latin original is printed: *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 19–20.
- 64 Translated from French: French envoys in Nijmegen to Louis XIV, [Nijmegen] 1678 November 8; quoted from Höynck, *Frankreich und seine Gegner auf dem Nymwegener Friedenskongreß*, 193 note 138.
- 65 "I want the Emperor to enjoy this vain pre-eminence which was attributed to the Empire by the Kings my predecessors, whose entire greatness and power have remained attached to my crown when they have only left these appearances of it in Germany";

translated from French, Louis XIV to the French ambassadors in Nijmegen, 1679 January 28; quoted from Höynck, *Frankreich und seine Gegner auf dem Nymwegener Friedenskongreß*, 193 note 138.

- 66 In this respect, the account in Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 400–401, who speaks of a veritable French “*doctrine*” and “*déclaration de principes*” on the freedom of choice of negotiating languages in relation to Longueville’s, Mazarin’s and Brienne’s statements on the Franco-Spanish negotiations (in the spring of 1647, see above), must be nuanced. However, it is accurate in the sense that even according to Brunot, France had not developed a “*programme*” to propagate its own language.
- 67 Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 335–336.
- 68 This argument, among others, is reported by the famous jurist Samuel von Pufendorf; cf. the quotation Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 334–338 note *, here 337.
- 69 Cf. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, V, 411–417.
- 70 The imperial document was sent in French translation under the title “*Notification envoyée au directoire le 10 juin par l’ambassade impériale à Francfort*” by the French envoys in Frankfurt to the Court on 13 June 1682; copy: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 207r–208r; quoted in excerpts by Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 414, who only reproduces the imperial refusal to submit a compromise proposal to the French themselves, but omits the imperial request to the Electorate of Mainz and the Bavarians to explore several more detailed possibilities for a compromise, thus reversing the document’s tenor: The imperial envoys were definitely interested in a pragmatic solution to this language dispute, not in a pompous rejection of any amicable agreement with the French; the document is edited in German by Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 345–349 (quotation 348).
- 71 AMAE, Mémoires et documents (hereafter: MD) All. 38, fol. 110r–115r, under the title “*Sur le cérémonial observé aux conférences de Francfort en 1681 et 1682*”; marginalia (erased): “*fait par N. L. Le Dran, premier commis des Affaires étrangères, le 17^e février 1718*”. On the alleged agreement cf. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 416–417, especially 416, where Le Dran is quoted (translated from French): “It was definitively resolved [...] that with regard to languages”; in Le Dran’s text (AMAE, MD All. 38, fol. 113r–114r), however, the word “definitively”, which changes the meaning of the statement, is not found—it was added by Brunot at this point. Moreover, Le Dran does not even speak of an agreement; he concludes the section on the language dispute with the words: “Things being in this state [after the Conclusum of the Imperial Diet on the French Proposition of 6 July], on 28 September the King’s ambassadors submitted to the ambassadors and deputies of the Empire a memorandum containing new proposals”: AMAE, MD All. 38, fol. 114.
- 72 In response to the French proposition of 6 July 1682 to the Imperial Directorate of the Electorate of Mainz, the Imperial Diet conceded allowing French and German (each with Latin translations) as languages of negotiation in Frankfurt (but “without prejudice or consequence” for future negotiations); however, this did not meet with Leopold I’s approval: Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 354 (quotation) and 355.
- 73 Translated from French. Cf. Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 355–356, quote 356.
- 74 On the Frankfurt Conference, cf. Malettke, *Les Relations entre la France et le Saint-Empire*, 402–418.
- 75 It has been received by Picavet, “*Le français et les langues étrangères*” among others; the interpretations of the Frankfurt conference by Roumiguière, “*Le français dans les relations diplomatiques*”, Rudolf, *Die Sprache in der Diplomatie*, and Ostrower, *Language, Law, and Diplomacy* are equally inaccurate. A detailed refutation of these erroneous accounts of 1682 can be found in Braun, *La connaissance du Saint-Empire*

- en France*, chapter V 3.4; furthermore, reference should be made to the completely correct account in Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 329–356, which is largely in agreement with the French archival documents and contains extensive quotations from them (including the imperial position, which has been reversed by Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*).
- 76 “There is no prince in Europe who has the right to impose on others the need to use a certain language in conferences and assemblies held between sovereigns, such as that of Frankfurt, or on any other occasion; each is free to use his natural language for his particular writings”, it says at the beginning; translated from French and quoted from the copy AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 223r–224r and 228r–229r, here fol. 223r (on the archival tradition cf. below). German as the “*langue naturelle*” of the Germans: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 224r.
- 77 For example, there are general explanations on the imperial estates and their rights; at the beginning of this section, the Empire is declared to be an aristocratic republic and the emperor is later compared (as already in Jean Bodin) to the doge of the Republic of Venice. Allusions to an official submission of the document could not be identified in the correspondence of the French envoys either.
- 78 It is stored in the archive in its entirety as a copy: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 223r–224r and 228r–229r. Partial edition among others, with faulty interpretation, in Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 414–415. No mention of this document in Le Dran, in Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, and in Saint-Romain and Harlay to Louis XIV, Frankfurt 1682 June 23; original: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 225r–227r, received on July 1; note fol. 225r: “*veu L[ouis]*”; it follows from this letter that the French envoys did not strive to formulate a “*doctrine*”, but sought to use the language dispute to prevent substantial negotiations at the Frankfurt Deputation Diet, which was dominated by the imperials; AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 226r–226v.
- 79 Cf. the copy of the memorandum: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 223r–224r and 228r–229r, here the Latin quotation from the Golden Bull with French translation AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 228r–228v, especially fol. 228v. For the context of this quotation see AMAE, CP All. 297, here fol. 228r. As late as the eighteenth century, there is sufficient evidence that the Latin language (“as the language that follows grammatical rules, which can only be learned by teaching grammar and is therefore not directly accessible to lay culture”) was referred to by the term *grammatica*, as it had been in the Middle Ages; Kessler, “Zur Bedeutung der lateinischen Sprache in der Renaissance”, 338.
- 80 Translated from French: Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 91.
- 81 Translated from French: Cf. Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 329–334, quote 330.
- 82 Except for Braun, “La Doctrine classique”; Braun, *La connaissance du Saint-Empire en France*.
- 83 In their correspondence, the French negotiators nevertheless (also) referred to the custom cultivated in Münster and Nijmegen.
- 84 In particular, the imperial estates assembled at the Regensburg Diet since 1663 could hardly be persuaded, even in the middle of the eighteenth century, to tolerate French even passively, as the language of submitted documents.
- 85 Cf. Babel, “Sprache und Politik im Frankreich der Frühen Neuzeit”.
- 86 For a critical view on the myth of French as “*langue universelle*”, with a particular focus on the eighteenth century see Siouffi, “De l’‘universalité’ européenne du français”.
- 87 Cf. Louis comte de Verjus de Crécy to Saint-Romain and Harlay, [Regensburg] 1682 May 18; copy: AMAE, CP All. 297, fol. 161r–164r, here fol. 162v–163r; quoted in excerpts (with transcription errors) in Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 413 note 2.

- 88 Cf. Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 356–358, especially 357.
- 89 Callières, *The Art of Diplomacy*, 98.
- 90 Rönnefarth, *Konferenzen und Verträge* III, 114.
- 91 Cf. the expertise of the Imperial Estates of 1697 August 2; text (German): *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 281–289; French translation: *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 290–298, especially 290. German version also printed by Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 152.
- 92 Cf. the Imperial replica of 1697 August 5; text (Latin): *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 299–318; French translation: *Actes et mémoires des négociations de la paix de Ryswick* II, 319–342, especially 319. This passage is quoted twice in Latin by Moser, *Abhandlung von den Europäischen Hof- und Staats-Sprachen*, 55 and 390.
- 93 In this, Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* V, 418–420 is correct, but his assessment of the Peace of Rastatt is incoherent: on the one hand, the French language of the treaty is relativised by the context of the negotiations; on the other hand, it is declared to be the sign of its final victory over Latin.
- 94 However, the negotiations were conducted mainly in French, even if Latin was used at the beginning by the emperor's principal envoy.
- 95 Translated from French. Cf. the memorandum of the French Congress Plenipotentiaries de Barberie de Saint-Contest and Rottembourg [for de Morville], Cambrai 1724 April 12 (received April 13); original: AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 55r–58r, here fol. 55r–55v.
- 96 AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 55v.
- 97 They justified this to the other congress participants from pragmatic points of view (with regard to the understanding of the text by the public), cf. AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 55v; legal arguments are not mentioned in their report on the negotiations in this regard.
- 98 “We used the pretext that Latin would not be understood by the public”; AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 55v–56r.
- 99 AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 56r, 57v.
- 100 Memorandum of Saint-Contest and Rottembourg [for Louis XV], Cambrai 1724 April 6; original: AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 14r–17r, here fol. 17r.
- 101 Cf. Morville to [the French Plenipotentiaries at the Congress], Versailles 1724 April 9; original: AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 40r–42r, here fol. 40r–40v. Therefore, an entirely French regulation was to be insisted on; as ultima ratio, however, a bilingual regulation with a Latin and a French column (the latter to be signed by the French envoys) could be proposed to the English: AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 40v–41r.
- 102 Cf. Morville to [French Congress Plenipotentiaries], Paris 1724 April 14; original: AMAE, MD France 486, fol. 59r–63r, here fol. 59r–60v.
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6 “Write in no Foreign Language, but Solely and Only in Swedish”

Languages of Internal Communication in Swedish Diplomacy, c. 1700–1792*

Sophie Holm

In December 1742, the Swedish envoy in Berlin, Carl Rudenschöld, wrote a report to the president of the Swedish Chancellery, Carl Gyllenborg. His letter dealt with customary, topical diplomatic news from the Prussian court and beyond. Since the Diet was assembled, it was read not only by the formal addressee, Gyllenborg, but also by the Diet’s subcommittee for foreign affairs, the Secret Committee. Incoming diplomatic reports were presented to the committee on a regular basis. On the same day as the committee read Rudenschöld’s letter, it also registered seventeen other incoming reports. It was, however, the letter from Berlin which caught the attention of the committee members. Rudenschöld had written his letter in French, which, as the committee stated, was contrary to official practice.¹ As a result, not only Rudenschöld but all Swedish diplomats abroad were reminded that they were supposed to use Swedish in their reports to Stockholm.²

Rudenschöld’s letter in December was in fact not the first letter in French he had sent to the chancellery president in 1742. Like many other Swedish diplomats he occasionally switched to French, although the vast majority of his letters were in Swedish.³ The use of French in correspondence between two Swedish noblemen engaged in diplomatic affairs might not seem surprising. French had, by the mid-eighteenth century, become a pan-European diplomatic language as well as a prestige language adopted by many elites in non-francophone countries.⁴ The widespread francophonie amongst the Swedish elite is well known, especially the aristocracy’s manifold cultural and political connections with France.⁵ Five years before receiving Rudenschöld’s controversial report from Berlin, Carl Gyllenborg had himself published a satirical comedy, *Swenska sprätthöken*, mocking overly Frenchified young noblemen and simultaneously testifying to the topicality of this phenomenon. Towards the end of the century, French was even described as the “second mother tongue” of Swedes,⁶ while the Swedish language was influenced by French concerning both vocabulary and, temporarily, syntax.⁷

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Although French could be expected both in diplomatic contexts and in situations influenced by polite sociability, the reaction of the Secret Committee shows that it was seen as inappropriate in an official diplomatic report. According to Theodor Westrin, a need to use Swedish internally arose in the eighteenth century precisely because reports were read not only by state officials but also by the Swedish Diet. Westrin's brief overview of language choices within Swedish diplomacy before 1813 was published in 1900.⁸ Since then, the internal linguistic practices amongst Swedish diplomats have received little or no scholarly attention.⁹ However, recent research on eighteenth-century diplomatic correspondence shows that diplomats were required to report in a domestic language also in political contexts very different from that of Sweden.¹⁰ Such requirements hint at the existence of language policy tendencies. Although language policy is often associated with the modern era, early-modern state-building processes, as Sue Wright has pointed out, often resulted in linguistic convergence and showed signs of "implicit and informal language planning".¹¹ This is true also for the Swedish early modern state and the political self-images of Swedish subjects.¹²

Language choices in internal diplomatic communications, such as the correspondence between a legation and the central administration, have been studied far less than external choices, such as languages used in treaties and during negotiations. However, internal diplomatic correspondence arguably offers valuable insights into the interplay between border-crossing diplomatic spheres and linguistic practices influenced by domestic language policy efforts. Against the backdrop of language policy tendencies on the one hand, and an expanding eighteenth-century European francophonie on the other, this essay explores how the linguistic practices of internal, diplomatic correspondence evolved in Sweden during the eighteenth century. To what extent did parallel uses of languages, as in the case of Rudenschöld's reporting, occur and how can they be explained? Which languages were involved and, especially, what was the position of French in this context of internal diplomatic communication?

The chapter is based on a comparison of correspondence in the Swedish National Archives' *Diplomatica* collections, which contain official internal diplomatic correspondence. The main source material consists of incoming letters from a selection of legations with special focus on Sweden's neighbouring countries, Russia and Denmark. Although the samples represent a fraction of all preserved diplomatic reports, similarities throughout the material indicate that they can be seen as representative. The chapter covers a period spanning roughly from the start of the century to the years surrounding Gustav III's death in 1792. This enables a long-term perspective both politically and culturally. In addition to incoming reports to Stockholm, some comparisons will be made with letters in the other direction or between legations.¹³ The chapter starts with an introduction to the diplomatic correspondence followed by a discussion of language choices in theory and in practice from a quantitative perspective. Since French, as will be discussed, was the most common second language in the correspondence, a section will be dedicated to a more qualitative analysis of letters written in French.

Diplomatic Reporting: Writers, Addressees, and Readers

After two tumultuous decades during the Great Northern War,¹⁴ Sweden's diplomatic representation consisted of between eight and twelve permanent diplomatic missions during most of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ They included the other capitals of the Baltic Sea region, diplomatic hubs such as Vienna, Paris and The Hague, and several German courts and cities. Among the new offices established during the century were Constantinople (1734) and Madrid (1740).¹⁶ The head of the diplomatic representation usually had the title envoy, minister plenipotentiary or resident, and only rarely ambassador. He was assisted by a lower-ranking official with the title commission secretary (*kommissionssekreterare*), who was expected to write diplomatic reports of his own.¹⁷

The diplomats sent abroad were the key figures of diplomatic correspondence. Their social and linguistic background as well as language skills were the foundation of the language choices they made. The Swedish Crown conducted its foreign affairs in several languages, mainly French, Latin and German, and foreign language skills were, accordingly, important for a successful diplomatic career.¹⁸ This is visible in recommendations and expectations concerning language skills, which show that these were seen as indispensable within the foreign affairs administration. When commission secretary positions were introduced in the 1680s, for example, the new instructions recommended that a secretary should learn the language of the host country, that of "conversations and conferences" and Latin "since it is commonly used by the Royal Chancellery and its ministers in negotiations, solemn ceremonies, letters and public writings".¹⁹ The position as commission secretary became a common starting point for diplomatic careers. Another entryway was the position as *kanslijunkare* at the Chancellery, a sort of apprentice position. *Kanslijunkare* were likewise officially required to know "Latin and other languages".²⁰

Diplomatic positions were mainly filled by members of the nobility, although this practice did not exclude non-nobles from pursuing a diplomatic career.²¹ The higher strata of society had access to multiple ways of learning foreign languages, especially French. Those who could afford it educated their children in French at home from an early age. Households were made into francophone environments by hiring French domestics, especially French nurses and governesses, and by using French between parents and children. Many families invested in a private teacher who was capable of teaching French or, in rare cases, was French himself. After being privately educated at home, the sons of noble families were sent to university at home or abroad accompanied by their private teacher and, sometimes, on a *grand tour*. Families unable to afford a private teacher at home could, instead, secure a position at court for their sons or send them to private schools in the hope of providing language training that way.²²

There is no comprehensive study of the educational background of the Swedish eighteenth-century diplomatic corps.²³ We know that the vast majority of state officials within the higher administration in general in the period 1720–1809 had studied at a university.²⁴ The administration also had an internal system for training

state officials after initial academic studies; from the mid-eighteenth century a specific exam became a requirement for appointments within the central administration.²⁵ Academic studies implied a knowledge of Latin, since Latin remained important at Swedish universities throughout the eighteenth century.²⁶ Although they were not considered part of the official curriculum, both French and German were taught by language masters at Swedish universities.²⁷ It is, in short, fair to assume that Swedish diplomats were generally skilled in the most common languages used in Swedish diplomacy, mainly as a result of their upbringing, private or academic studies and, sometimes, travels.

Concerning internal communication, more important than foreign language skills was perhaps the native or first language of individual diplomats. As Heiko Droste has shown, the majority of Swedish seventeenth-century diplomats were foreigners: around two thirds in total, most of whom were Germans.²⁸ This meant, among other things, that a large proportion of Swedish diplomats reported in a language other than Swedish in the seventeenth century, in many cases in German.²⁹ The situation changed towards the end of the century, when the proportion of Swedes grew.³⁰ Finally, in 1720, a new Chancellery instruction established the principle that diplomatic service was reserved for “native Swedish men” (“infödda svenske män”).³¹ Although the eighteenth-century corps was recruited within the Swedish realm, this does not, however, mean that all diplomats were native Swedish speakers. First, even after the territorial losses of the Great Northern War, Sweden still had German territories from which diplomats could be recruited. Secondly, the Swedish aristocracy, as Charlotta Wolff has stressed, was cosmopolitan; linguistic pluralism was fairly common among the elite from which many diplomats were recruited.³² Singling out a native language or one dominant language is often misleading.³³ A certain degree of variation in the linguistic backgrounds of diplomats can, in other words, be assumed.

Besides the native language or language skills of the diplomat, the language choices of the correspondence further depended on the receiving party. Here, a distinction should be made between the formal addressees of diplomatic reports and a wider circle of actual readers. The person or institution to whom diplomats reported changed more than once during the eighteenth century as a result of changes both in the form of government and in the state administration. These changes concerned, among other things, the relation between the ruler, the Chancellery (*Kanslikollegium*) and the chancellery president (*kanslipresident*). The first two decades of the century witnessed a power concentration around the ruler,³⁴ whereas the new form of government introduced in 1719–1720 led to a gradual increase in the role of the Chancellery and especially that of the chancellery president.³⁵ The president presided over his own office, which corresponded with Swedish diplomats on important matters. As a member of the Council and a central link between the central administration and the government, he acted as a *de facto* minister of foreign affairs. Gustav III, on the contrary, took personal control over foreign affairs after his coup d'état in 1772 and made the presidential office into a cabinet under the king.³⁶

These circumstances were reflected in reporting practices. Archived correspondence from the first two decades of the eighteenth century shows a mixed practice: sometimes only letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* have been preserved, sometimes letters to the king and to the Chancellery are archived together and sometimes separately. As a result of the increased role of the president within the foreign affairs administration after 1719, diplomats henceforth wrote parallel reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* and to the president systematically. Between 1719 and 1772 we find these reports consistently archived in different volumes. Besides this double reporting, diplomats also corresponded with other high officials. Arne Forssell lists no fewer than seven officials within the state bureaucracy who had the official right to correspond with Swedish diplomats abroad.³⁷ This correspondence was, however, not as systematic as the mandatory double reporting to *Kungl. Maj:t* and the president; it has therefore been excluded in the overviews below. The double reporting was ended by Gustav III's administrative changes and from 1772 diplomatic reports are preserved in a single series consisting of so-called dispatches (*depescher*).

The addressees mentioned so far were the formal addressees of diplomatic reports. As far as the actual readers are concerned, some additional remarks are required. The new form of government introduced in 1719–1720 marked the start of the so-called Age of Liberty (1719–1772) during which royal power significantly decreased in favour of the four-estate Diet and the Council of the Realm. In this period, the term *Kungl. Maj:t* (*Kunglig Majestät*) [Royal Majesty] referred to the King and the Council as the governing body of the realm, the King voting alongside the councillors with one extra vote. Thus letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* were neither addressed personally to the ruler, nor read by him alone. Diplomatic reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* or to the president could, moreover, be read by the subdivisions of the Diet involved in foreign affairs, the Secret Committee and its subcommittee, consisting of representatives of the nobility, the clergy and the burghers.³⁸ The Diet was assembled approximately every third year and its subcommittees monitored diplomatic reports throughout the duration of each Diet.

Diplomatic reports had, in other words, to be linguistically accessible to a range of potential readers. Between the king, the Council, the president, the Chancellery and the diplomats, one can assume a certain degree of similar language skills. The presidents were, for example, often former diplomats themselves and the Chancellery officials, as mentioned, were expected to know foreign languages. The same cannot be said about the Diet members engaged in foreign affairs, such as the approximately 100 members of the Secret Committee. Although assuming that the Diet members “generally did not understand foreign languages” seems exaggerated,³⁹ their language skills must certainly have varied considerably. Many might have spoken or understood French, since French skills were not only common among the nobility, but also in the wider society and especially among those desiring to ascend socially.⁴⁰ The fact that French was mastered and used by different social groups has been shown, for example, by Margareta Östman's study of francophone literature published in eighteenth-century Sweden.⁴¹

Although common, French skills were, however, still a question of social strata, educational background and professional environment.⁴² Access to the

most efficient learning channels required financial resources and travel possibilities. Not all Diet members dealing with foreign affairs can be assumed to have known French or at least to have understood the language well. Especially among the clergy, there was no widespread need for learning French.⁴³ On the contrary, the clergy represented the “ecclesiastical complex church–school–university” in which Latin was widely used,⁴⁴ and were probably more skilled in Latin than the other Diet members. For some burghers, German might have been the most common foreign language for commercial reasons. In short, if the variety of readers during the Age of Liberty are taken into consideration comprehensively, one can assume diverging language skills amongst different readers as well as discrepancies between the language skills or preferred languages of those writing and of those reading diplomatic reports.

Language Choices in Theory and Practice—An Overview

The reactions in 1742 to Carl Rudenschöld’s letter in French from Berlin show, as mentioned, that there was an official practice concerning language choices in diplomatic correspondence. An indication of this is the fact that Rudenschöld’s letter caused no discussion about the requirements *per se*. On the contrary, the Secret Committee motivated a reminder to all diplomats abroad with a very brief reference to what had “previously been resolved”.⁴⁵ In other words, the requirement to write diplomatic reports in Swedish seems to have been a policy known to all parties concerned. This leads to the question of how and when this official practice was defined and whether it corresponded to actual language choices in diplomatic correspondence.

The origins of the official requirement to report in Swedish remain uncertain. One can, like Theodor Westrin, stress the importance of the new form of government introduced in 1719.⁴⁶ The new system presumably created a greater need for internal communication in Swedish since, as has been discussed, not all Diet members were proficient in foreign languages or at least not in the same ones. It is possible that requirements concerning diplomatic reporting were discussed at some of the early Diets after 1719.⁴⁷ It is, however, also possible that the discussions in 1742 referred to previous decisions which went further back. As Heiko Droste has pointed out, increasing debates about the internal language of the Swedish state administration during the second half of the seventeenth century also concerned the languages of internal diplomatic correspondence.⁴⁸ These debates were part of a general interest in promoting the use of Swedish domestically, an interest which, as Jonas Nordin has argued, took several forms. One example was an aspiration to cultural homogenisation in Sweden’s Baltic provinces; another was an addition to the instructions for the Chancellery in 1713 requiring that clerks use a “pure and clear Swedish” and avoid foreign words.⁴⁹ This requirement remained in the instructions until 1813 and consequently concerned many future diplomats whose careers had started at a lower position within the Chancellery.

Although it is unclear when a requirement to report in Swedish was established, we can deduce some details about the official practice from the Secret Committee’s

discussions in 1742 and their results. It was, in fact, not only Rudenschöld's letter which the committee discussed. An outgoing letter in French from the presidential office also caused a reaction.⁵⁰ This indicates that the requirement to write in Swedish concerned both incoming and outgoing letters. However, it only seems to have concerned the more official and formal part of the correspondence. For example, when the president, Gyllenborg, had to explain his outgoing letter in French, he referred to it as a mere "avertissement". In his own words, he always wrote in French when communicating information "privately" ("enskylt"), but in Swedish whenever a letter "was sent on command or concerned something originating from His Majesty".⁵¹ Similarly, when he executed the reminder to all diplomats abroad, he stressed that the requirement to write in Swedish concerned only letters "in public matters".⁵² The minister in London, for example, was instructed to "write in no foreign language, but solely and only in Swedish", if the letter concerned "public matters in any way" ("publique ärender").⁵³ The instructions for diplomats abroad and Gyllenborg's own defence thus differentiated between official matters—*publik* referring to state affairs, the crown or the common good—and other matters, such as private ones. Non-public matters, it seems, were excluded from the official linguistic practice.⁵⁴

We can, in other words, conclude that the diplomatic correspondence functioned according to two premises: a requirement to use Swedish for official, so-called public matters and, consequently, a certain flexibility in other matters. To what extent did the correspondence match these expectations? The following overview and discussion of actual language choices is based on 109 volumes from seven different *Diplomatica* collections representing more than half of the Swedish legations abroad: Copenhagen, Moscow/St. Petersburg, Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin and Hamburg.⁵⁵ A volume consists of letters either from or to a diplomat (or sometimes a legation) during a certain period of time. The overviews below are based on volumes containing letters from diplomats to Stockholm. Since diplomats reported frequently, most volumes cover no more than two to three years or, from the 1770s, often only one. In some exceptional cases, a single volume covers a longer period.⁵⁶ For Denmark and Russia, at least one volume was selected for each decade between 1700 and the 1790s (letters to *Kungl. Maj:t*) or between 1719 and 1772 (letters to the chancellery president), for the other collections at least one volume per twenty years.⁵⁷ Additional samples have been included to contextualise, on the one hand, cases of unusual language choices and, on the other, the Diet 1742–1743, when language choices, as discussed, became an issue.

Figure 6.1 shows the language use in diplomatic reports sent to *Kungl. Maj:t* from the start of the century to the early 1790s. Around the year 1700, four out of the seven sets of correspondence included in this overview were conducted in Swedish. The other three were either entirely German or German and Swedish. The letters from the envoy in Vienna, Henning von Strahlenheim, were in German, as were those written by the resident in Hamburg, Henrik Gabriel Rothlieb. The reports from Berlin consisted of letters from two diplomats and were written in either Swedish or German depending on the sender: the envoy Anders Leijonstedt wrote in Swedish, while the resident J.H. Storren wrote in German. Both von

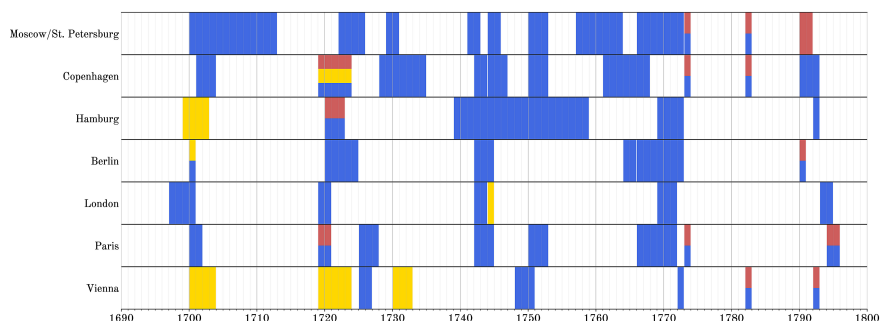


Figure 6.1 Language use in diplomatic reports sent to *Kungl. Maj:t* from c. 1700 to the 1790s.

Explanations: grey = Swedish, light grey = German, dark grey = French. Volumes are separated by a dark line. Included samples (diplomat, years covered by the volume (volume number)) from legations north to south:

St. Petersburg/Moscow (DM): Knipercrona (snr) 1700–1712 (124), Cedercreutz 1722–1725 (146), von Dittmer 1729–1730 (164), E. M. von Nolcken 1741–1742 (197), Barck 1744–1745 (243), von Greiffenheim 1750–1752 (289), Posse 1757–1763 (298), Ribbing 1766–1773 (349), J. F. von Nolcken 1773 (386), d'Albedyhll 1782 (396), von Stedingk 1790–1791 (451).

Copenhagen (DD): Leijonkloo 1701–1703 (111), Adlerfelt 1719–1723 (136), Örnecrona 1728–1734 (149), Palmstierna 1742–1743 (179), C.F. von Höpken 1744–1746 (216), Fleming 1750–1752 (233), Sprengtporten 1761–1767 (274), 1773 (291) and 1782 (300), von Ehrenheim 1790–1792 (349).

Hamburg (DGH): Rothlieb 1699–1702 (777), Reenstierna 1720–1722 (804), König 1739–1758 (862), Faxell 1769–1772 (897), Samuel Hjelmér 1792 (964).

Berlin (DBB): Leijonstedt & Storren 1700 (35), Posse 1720–1724 (59), Rudenschöld 1742–1744 (79), von Bohlen 1764–1766 (107), Zöge von Manteuffel 1766–1772 (109), von Carisien 1790 (137).

London (DA): Leijoncrona 1697–1700 (155), Sparre 1719–1720 (229), Wasenberg 1742–1743 (275), Ringwicht 1744 (325), G. A. Nolcken 1769–1771 (372), von Engeström 1793–1794 (448).

Paris (DG): Palmquist 1700–1701 (102), Sparre 1719–1720 (224), von Gedda 1725–1727 (233), Ekeblad 1742–1744 (312), Scheffer 1750–1752 (327), Creutz 1766–1771 (429) and 1773 (437), Staël von Holstein 1794–1795 (481).

Vienna (DGW): von Strahlenheim 1700–1703 (325), G.V. von Höpken 1719–1723 (355), Tessin 1725–1726 (362), von Krassow 1730–1732 (370), Barck 1748–1750 (429) & 1772 (453), Sahlmann & Matolay 1782.

Strahlenheim and Rothlieb came from Swedish Pomerania and can be assumed to have been native German speakers.⁵⁸ Storren's background is unknown, but his letters were consistently in German, which suggests that he was German-speaking as well.⁵⁹ This general picture at the beginning of the century thus corresponds with the characteristics of Sweden's diplomatic corps in the seventeenth century, when a large number of the diplomats were Germans and often corresponded in German.⁶⁰

The first years after the Great Northern War show a different situation. The proportion of diplomats writing exclusively in Swedish did not change significantly: three out of seven exchanges are entirely in Swedish. However, the four that included another language were not in German only anymore. Half of them consisted of reports written in Swedish with occasional letters in French; the other half were the envoy Pehr Adlerfelt's letters from Copenhagen, which were mainly

Swedish and German with a few letters in French, and the resident Georg Vilhelm von Höpken's letters from Vienna, which were entirely in German. Samples have been counted as bi- or multilingual if at least two letters in one volume were written in another language than the rest of the letters. The number of German letters in Adlerfelt's correspondence, for example, was relatively low.⁶¹ In other words, between the turn of the century and the post-war years, German had lost its previous position in the correspondence and French had entered as the main language used alongside Swedish.

The parallel use of two or more languages was, however, not a lasting pattern. After the early 1720s, there is a shift from bilingual (or multilingual) correspondence to exclusively Swedish reports. This is very clear regarding the reports from Denmark and Russia, and it seems to be the case also in the exchanges with fewer samples. After Gustav III's coup d'état in 1772, there is a shift back to bilingual correspondence, French being used alongside Swedish as in the early 1720s. However, the correspondence included in the overview indicates that the shift was not a radical one. Samples from the 1790s show three diplomats writing in Swedish, three in Swedish and French, and one, the Swedish ambassador in St. Petersburg, only in French. In general, the letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* thus indicate that Swedish diplomats reported mainly in Swedish throughout the eighteenth century and especially during the Age of Liberty 1719–1772. Since the addressee was the ruler and the government, reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* were formal and official, and they seemed, in other words, to have followed the rule that public matters were to be communicated in Swedish.

Figure 6.2 shows language use in the letters written to the chancellery president between 1719 and 1772. Swedish dominates in these reports as well. However, they differ substantially from the letters to *Kungl. Maj:t*, since bilingual correspondence does not disappear after the early 1720s. On the contrary, the majority of the samples from the 1720s to the early 1770s represent bilingual exchanges: Swedish-French in all cases except the correspondence of Caspar Joachim Ringwicht, who wrote in German and French. In other words, most of the same diplomats who consistently used Swedish in their reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* conducted a bilingual correspondence with the president. To mention just a few, the envoy Carl Posse wrote to *Kungl. Maj:t* in Swedish from Berlin 1720–1724, but to the president in both Swedish and French. Erik Mattias von Nolcken and Nils Barck, both diplomats in Russia, did the same in the 1740s, as did Wilhelm Sprengtporten in Copenhagen in 1762.⁶²

Moreover, contrary to the linguistic shifts in the reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* during the first and the last decades of the century, the shorter period for which continuous reports to the president exist shows a relatively stable situation. French was used occasionally at the beginning, in the middle and towards the end of the period. However, *occasionally* should be stressed here, since samples, as mentioned, have been categorised as bilingual also in cases with only a few letters in French. Some diplomats wrote in French on a regular basis, whereas others wrote almost exclusively in Swedish and only very rarely in French. The occasional use of French also varied within individual correspondence over time. Although the categorisation

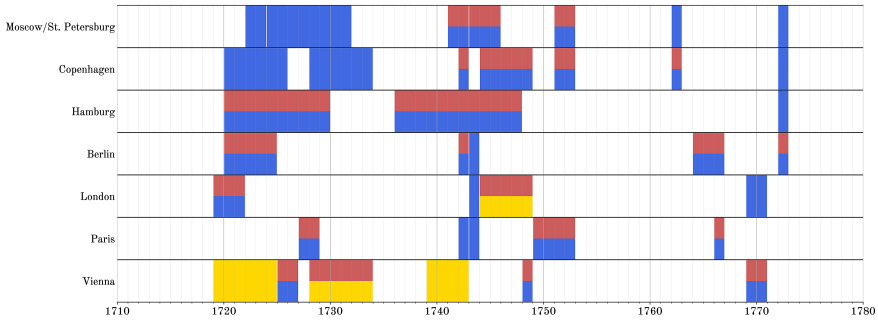


Figure 6.2 Language use in the letters to the Chancery President 1719–1772.

Explanations: grey = Swedish, light grey = German, dark grey = French. Volumes are separated by a dark line. Included samples (diplomat, years covered by the volume (volume number)) from legations north to south:

St. Petersburg/Moscow (DM): Cedercreutz 1722–1728 (148), von Dittmer 1724–1731 (170), E.M. von Nolcken 1741–1742 (201), Barck 1743–1745 (245), von Greiffenhein 1751–1752 (291), Posse 1762 (307), Ribbing 1772 (356).

Copenhagen (DD): Adlerfelt 1720–1725 (138), Örnecrona 1728–1733 (150), Palmstierna 1742 (183), C.F. von Höpken 1744–1748 (218), Fleming 1751–1752 (237), Sprengtporten 1762 (277) & 1772 (288).Hamburg (DGH): Reenstierna 1720–1729 (807), König 1736–1747 (863), Faxell 1772 (907).

Berlin (DBB): Posse 1720–1724 (60), Rudenschöld 1742 (83) & 1743 (84), von Bohlen 1764–1766 (108), Zöge von Manteuffel 1772 (115).

London (DA): Sparre 1719–1721 (235), Wasenberg 1743 (283), Ringwicht 1744–1748 (328), G. A. Nolcken 1769–1770 (378).

Paris (DG): von Gedda 1727–1728 (236), Ekeblad 1742 (313) & 1743 (314), Scheffer 1749–1752 (329), Creutz 1766 (430).

Vienna (DGW): G.V. von Höpken 1719–1724 (358), Tessin 1725–1726 (363), von Krassow 1728–1733 (372), Ringwicht 1739–1742 (401), Barck 1748 (431) & 1769–1770 (448).

used here is generalising, it highlights the extent to which French was used either sporadically or regularly alongside Swedish and, likewise, the absence of another language with the same function. Still, the occasional use of French only rarely competed with Swedish which, it should be stressed, was the main language also in reports to the president.

Despite Swedish clearly being the main language of internal communication, both the occasional use of French and the use of German by certain diplomats point to an underlying, although limited, multilingualism. The reasons behind this multilingualism are not always clear, but some plausible explanations can be considered. To start with, German appears in connection with individual diplomats and to the legation in Vienna in particular. In some cases, the diplomat might have been a native German speaker and not proficient enough in order to report in Swedish. A lower proficiency in Swedish can be assumed in cases where diplomats used German exclusively or switched between German and French, not using Swedish at all. German, it should be stressed, appears as a language used mainly instead of Swedish, not alongside it.⁶³ Besides Georg Vilhelm von Höpken in the early 1720s, the envoy Carl Vilhelm von Krassow, for example,

wrote exclusively in German from Vienna to *Kungl. Maj:t* in the early 1730s, and in German and French to the president. Like von Strahlenheim and Rothlieb mentioned earlier, von Krassow came from Swedish Pomerania.⁶⁴ Georg Vilhelm von Höpken, whose family was established in Bremen, likewise came from one of Sweden's German territories.⁶⁵ In some cases, thus, the recruitment of diplomats from Sweden's German territories explains the continued use of German as an internal diplomatic language.

The employment of German-speaking diplomats still in the eighteenth century is not entirely surprising. German skills were certainly mandatory for diplomats sent on missions to places such as the imperial court, with which matters concerning internal German affairs were conducted in German.⁶⁶ Following the same logic, German correspondence could also be expected in other German cities, where German skills were also important and German-speaking diplomats might have been seen as equally useful. However, among the samples from Berlin and Hamburg, German only appears during the first years of the century and then disappears.⁶⁷ Moreover, geographical origin and possible native language(s) did not always correlate with language use. Pehr Adlerfelt, who was born in Stockholm to a father from the eastern half of the realm (present-day Finland), reported partially in German.⁶⁸ On the contrary, Johan Fredrik König, who was born in Stockholm to a merchant from Bremen, wrote to *Kungl. Maj:t* only in Swedish, while occasionally using French with the president. Carl von Bohlen, who came from a German noble family, did the same during his service as Swedish envoy in Berlin, as did his successor Otto Jakob Zöge von Manteuffel, whose family was of German-Baltic nobility.⁶⁹

Alongside the native language(s) of the diplomat in charge, another plausible explanation to consider is the role of secretaries. The language skills of secretaries might have influenced language choices in at least two ways: the secretary can either be assumed to be the reason for correspondence in a foreign language or, in the case of occasional language switches, we might assume that the secretary wrote in Swedish and the diplomat in a foreign language. Regarding the first option, the fact that some secretaries lacked Swedish skills had, indeed, contributed to the high proportion of reports in foreign languages in the seventeenth century.⁷⁰ The situation in the eighteenth century was, however, not directly comparable, most importantly since there was a heightened pressure to keep the internal communication Swedish. Since very few exchanges were entirely non-Swedish, the possible influence of secretaries unable to write in Swedish seems very small.

It is more difficult to define the influence of secretaries in relation to occasional language switches without in-depth manuscript analysis or information about the internal conditions of individual legations. However, attributing language switches to the fact that some letters were written by a secretary and some by the diplomat seems an insufficient explanation. It does not, for example, explain correspondence that shows an alternation between Swedish and one or two other languages in the same handwriting. Consider the reports by Thure Bielke during his relatively short-term mission to Vienna in 1719–1721. Amongst his mostly Swedish reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* we find a small number of letters in French.⁷¹ Some of them are in the

same handwriting as the Swedish letters and were probably written by a secretary. Others are in the same handwriting as Bielke's valediction and signature. Shifting between Swedish and French was, in other words, not a question of whether the letter was written by the secretary or not. Moreover, to assume, in a case like this, that the same diplomat who was dictating letters in both Swedish and French wrote letters in French merely due to a low proficiency in Swedish does not seem likely. Secretaries should rather be seen as an insignificant explanation alongside other, more important explanations, such as deliberate language switches by the author of a letter for various reasons.⁷²

In short, although the mechanisms behind individual language choices are elusive, it is clear that different dynamics were at play. Whereas German tended to replace Swedish, French was used alongside Swedish or, in a few cases, German. We find French not only in individual letters, but also in sections of letters in Swedish. Moreover, as stated above, French was used occasionally in the reports to the president from the 1720s onwards and by all diplomatic missions included in this overview. Contrary to German, the use of French was, thus, neither tied to a specific legation nor to individual diplomats. Factors such as the native language(s) of a diplomat or the language skills of his secretary might explain the limited use of German, but fail to explain the widespread, occasional use of French. The latter, thus, merits a closer look.

“Je n’ay a vous donner que des idées particulieres”: An Informal and Personal Alternative

The fact that French was used occasionally by so many diplomats leads to the question as to what extent there was room for this practice within the framework of the official requirements. Assuming a certain linguistic flexibility concerning non-public matters, it is not surprising to find letters in French dealing not with diplomatic news, but with matters such as seasonal greetings, personal requests or family affairs. This concerns some of the rare cases of letters in French addressed to *Kungl. Maj:t* among the reports in the early 1720s, when there was more linguistic variety than in the following decades. In 1720, for example, the resident in Hamburg, Axel Reenstierna, wrote two letters in French, one in which he congratulated the new king Frederick I and another in which he recommended a certain general Schutz.⁷³ Although Reenstierna also occasionally used French in reports with ordinary diplomatic news, the language choice in these two letters was consistent with a content that was a personal matter between him and his ruler. A similar connection can be seen in a letter in French from the minister in Copenhagen Carl Fredrik von Höpken to Gyllenborg in May 1744. The letter did not contain any big news, since, as von Höpken explained, “il n’est rien passé icy, qui puisse me fournir de la matière pour ma relation au Conseil Royal de la Chancellerie”. A whole paragraph at the end of the letter was instead dedicated to von Höpken's appreciation of Gyllenborg's support, his “satisfaction particulière”, as von Höpken had been given the title of chamberlain.⁷⁴ The letter was, thus, mainly a personal thank you note, not a formal report.

In Reenstierna's and von Höpken's letters, the language switch from Swedish to French corresponded to a switch in the content. However, the distinction between public and non-public seems to have been more than strictly a question of content. In some cases, this distinction rather concerned the position from which a person was writing. In fact, when Gyllenborg wrote the letter in French that caused the Secret Committee to react, the content consisted of his thoughts about Denmark's intentions vis-à-vis the Swedish succession. This would presumably not have counted as a private matter. However, Gyllenborg was cautious to inform the recipient, the minister Carl Magnus Wasenberg in London, that official orders from *Kungl. Maj:t* would follow. As Gyllenborg explained, "ce n'est absolument qu'en particulier que j'ai voulu en attendant vous en faire part".⁷⁵ Three weeks later, Gyllenborg wrote another letter to Wasenberg in French with an explicit motivation for his language choice. He stressed that the ideas presented were his private ones ("des idées particulières") and that all letters written in French should be interpreted this way.⁷⁶ In his letters to Wasenberg, Gyllenborg thus followed the logic which he had presented to the Secret Committee. He made a distinction between his personal opinions and formal instructions or other information originating from *Kungl. Maj:t*. The question was not a distinction between different categories of content, but a distinction between whether Gyllenborg was writing from a formal position or privately.

The same distinction can be seen in incoming reports to the president in the same period. The Swedish envoy in Russia, Nils Barck, added a postscript in French to a letter to Gyllenborg in January 1745. The letter, which was entirely in Swedish, dealt with news from St. Petersburg, mainly the recent illness of the Grand Duke and speculations concerning the empress's plans in case the heir presumptive died unexpectedly. The French postscript, similarly, dealt with local rumours about a letter from the successor to the Swedish throne, Adolph Frederick, to a certain de Brummer, presumably the Grand Duke's educator Otto von Brummer. Barck communicated the opinions of his anonymous source, some of which concerned Adolph Frederick's claimed ignorance about Russian circumstances and thoughts on how Gyllenborg should act. In short, both the letter and the postscript concerned political news from the Russian court. However, as Barck pointed out at the beginning of the postscript, this part of the letter was directed to the president "en particulier".⁷⁷ Like Gyllenborg's correspondence with Wasenberg, Barck was thus switching from writing an official report to addressing Gyllenborg privately and switched languages accordingly.

Similar switches, depending on the position from which the diplomat was writing, can be found in reports to the president from the start of systematic double reporting in the 1720s to its end in the early 1770s. During a diplomatic mission to Vienna in 1725–1726, Carl Gustaf Tessin, who later became chancellery president himself, started his correspondence with two letters in French, but then wrote almost exclusively in Swedish. The letters in French were written during his seven-week journey from Stockholm to Vienna, when he had not yet taken his place as envoy. Having arrived in Vienna, he switched to Swedish. Although his letters lack explicit comments on the language choice, they imply a connection between

the chosen language and the position from which they were written.⁷⁸ A later example is the correspondence of the Swedish envoy in Copenhagen, Wilhelm Sprengtporten, who wrote mostly in Swedish and only occasionally switched to French. In the second half of March 1762, we find three letters in French parallel to two letters in Swedish. All five letters dealt mostly with a sudden rearmament within the Danish army and navy, which was important military news during the ongoing Seven Years' War. Although the letters in French did not differ in content and were not explicitly labelled as private ones, the fact that one of them was an answer to a private letter from the president ("Je viens de recevoir la lettre particulière...") and the second letter in Swedish referred back to the last Swedish one, not the letters in French in between, indicates that Sprengtporten, likewise, was writing to the president formally in Swedish and privately in French.⁷⁹

However, not all switches between Swedish and French can be explained by a distinction between different contents or different roles of the sender. French is also visible in the correspondence as traces of oral interactions with representatives of the host country. In a letter in French to Wasenberg in May 1742, for example, Gyllenberg explained that his letter was a response to comments made by the British Secretary of State John Carteret to Wasenberg. Gyllenberg wanted Wasenberg to be able to read the answer to Carteret.⁸⁰ The letter was, in other words, intended for use in an oral interaction and French was a way of avoiding translation. Similarly, incoming reports from diplomats in different postings could contain sections in French or be written entirely in French if conversations were quoted. In December 1740, for example, Carl Otto von Höpken, commission secretary at the embassy in Copenhagen, described a conversation he had had with Johan Sigismund Schulin, the Danish foreign minister. Von Höpken related the reactions of the Danish court to the changes in Russia after the death of empress Anna. The letter was entirely in Swedish until the end when von Höpken summarised Schulin's thoughts on the Russian envoy Bestuzhev's loyalties and whether these had changed: "[*in Swedish*] he [Schulin] said that the Royal Danish Court thought about this change, in his own wording: [*in French*] que les choses sont retombées par là dans la situation, ou elles devoient naturellement venir".⁸¹

The French quote inserted in von Höpken's letter was rather short and could easily have been translated or paraphrased in Swedish. It should be stressed that conversations were usually recounted in the words of the diplomat and thus in Swedish. As von Höpken's letter shows, direct quotes in the original language of the conversation were, however, sometimes deemed necessary to convey a truthful report. The words of someone like Schulin could be interpreted as an expression of a foreign court's official policy, and the exact wording therefore mattered. Sometimes we find lengthy passages in French in diplomatic reports describing similar important conversations with high-ranking statesmen. One example is a report in June 1782 from Gustaf d'Albedyhll, chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, in which he described a conversation with the Russian Vice-Chancellor, Count Ivan Andreevich Osterman, regarding plausible outcomes in the ongoing Anglo-French war. D'Albedyhll inserted long quotes by Osterman in French, whereas the rest of his report, including his own thorough reflections on the topic, was in Swedish.

He mentioned, for example, that Osterman referred to an extract from a Swedish dispatch that had been shown to him,

[*in Swedish*] simultaneously testifying to the importance given to the topic by the honourable Princess, adding: [*in French*] | Les affaires ont considerablement changé de face depuis le moment ou cette dépêche a été écrite. L'Angleterre a manifesté d'une maniere non-équivoque que c'est de la meilleure foi qu'elle desire la paix avec la Hollande, et que la facilité qu'Elle a laissé entrevoir n'a point été illusoire.⁸²

Using French to quote someone or to facilitate communication with a third party must have been a grey area between situations in which French was accepted and in which Swedish should have been used. These needs did not automatically prompt a language switch.⁸³ The fact that they sometimes did points to different personal linguistic practices. French was certainly sometimes used indiscriminately by some diplomats. A telling example is the letter from Rudenschöld in 1742, which caused the Diet's Secret Committee to react. Rudenschöld's letter dealt with matters of high importance for the assembled estates, namely information about Russian intentions in relation to the election of a new successor to the Swedish throne.⁸⁴ Together with the ongoing peace negotiations with Russia, the election of a successor to the throne was two of the biggest questions the Diet had to decide. In other words, Rudenschöld communicated information that was clearly a public matter to be discussed by the Secret Committee and it is no surprise that the committee thought he had made an inappropriate language choice.

In cases where there does not seem to be any immediate reason for the use of French, the explanation can be sought in the highly francophone working environment of Swedish diplomats. Although the formal diplomatic communication of the Swedish Crown, such as treaties or diplomatic notes, was multilingual, Swedish diplomats increasingly used French in any other communication with the host country. This use of French is visible in the diplomatic correspondence not only, as mentioned, in French quotes, but also as copies of letters between the reporting diplomat and representatives of the court where he was based. Among the diplomats already mentioned, for example, Carl Fredrik von Höpken corresponded with Schulin in Copenhagen in French,⁸⁵ as did Wilhelm Sprengtporten with Schulin's successor Johan Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff.⁸⁶ Similarly, the Swedish plenipotentiary in London, Carl Sparre, and the commission secretary, Anders Skutenhielm, received letters from English authorities and high officials almost exclusively in French between 1720 and 1736.⁸⁷

Concerning the working environment, it should moreover be stressed that Swedish diplomats used French not only for external communication, but also with each other. In comparison to the vertical communication with Stockholm, this correspondence represented a horizontal, less-monitored communication. Without establishing a detailed timeframe, it is clear that many Swedish diplomats opted for French early on when communicating with their peers.⁸⁸ To name just a few examples, preserved letters sent from Swedish diplomats to the envoy in London, Christoffer Leijoncrona, between 1689 and 1710, for example, show a

mixed practice. Leijoncrona received letters in Swedish, French and German, but French was used more often than German.⁸⁹ As resident in Hamburg, Reenstierna received letters in the same languages in the 1720s.⁹⁰ On the contrary, around the time when language choices were discussed at the Diet, in the 1740s, the ministers in Copenhagen received letters from other Swedish legations mainly in French and only to a lesser extent in Swedish.⁹¹ If the letters between legations are taken into consideration, one could speak of a scale in which the use of French increased according to the degree of informality: official reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* at the most formal end and the horizontal communication between legations at the informal end. The correspondence between diplomats and the chancellery president can be situated in a fluctuating middle, shifting, as has been discussed, between official and personal matters and between official and private communication.⁹² Opting for French signalled whereabouts on the scale a letter was situated.

Conclusion: Navigating Between Language Requirements Abroad and at Home

From the turn of the century to the 1790s, the way Swedish diplomats reported from abroad changed several times. Some changes concerned the language choices in internal communication, although these were also characterised by a certain degree of continuity. A big change during the first decades of the century was the shift from multilingualism to an almost exclusively Swedish communication in the reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* and, similarly, a shift to French being used occasionally alongside Swedish from the 1770s. In the reports sent to the chancellery president during the Age of Liberty 1719–1772, the majority of legations used French alongside Swedish already from the 1720s.

These language choices underline a stark contrast between the eighteenth century and the previous century. The linguistic variety of the seventeenth century, especially the important role of German highlighted by Heiko Droste,⁹³ disappeared after the Great Northern War. It was replaced by a relatively high degree of monolingual Swedish reports, which indicates that the new form of government introduced in 1719 changed how diplomats were required to report.⁹⁴ As has been discussed, language skills differed between those writing and those reading diplomatic reports. The official practice therefore explicitly mandated the exclusive use of Swedish in public matters, such as state affairs in general and other matters connected to the crown.

Although there were exceptions, theory and practice mostly coincided in diplomatic correspondence, since diplomats reported mainly in Swedish in accordance with the official requirement. German was used by a very limited number of diplomats in total, probably due to low written proficiency in Swedish, whereas French was used in reports to *Kungl. Maj:t* only very rarely. The example presented in the introduction—a diplomat using French when communicating important diplomatic news—was an exception, not a rule, as far as the general pattern is concerned. It was, however, also a typical example of the subtle multilingualism visible, if reports to both *Kungl. Maj:t* and the president are taken into consideration.

This multilingualism can partially be explained by the fact that the language choice for non-public matters was left undefined. As the use of French alongside Swedish in the correspondence with the president shows, a distinction between official and personal matters or between formal and informal communication was indeed made through the choice of language. The content was sometimes personal, but many times did not differ from the content communicated in Swedish.⁹⁵ By writing either in Swedish or in French, a diplomat rather signalled whether he was communicating as an official of the crown or privately, regardless of the content.

Although there were clear connections between the form of government and requirements to use Swedish in official reports, the role of the Diet between 1719 and 1772 should not be exaggerated. First, as previous research shows, the state administration had monitored internal linguistic practices already before 1719.⁹⁶ Secondly, the widespread occasional use of French and individual diplomats reporting in German also after 1719 show that the official requirements were never met entirely and that the underlying multilingualism was higher than it might seem at first. Thirdly, the use of French only increased slightly and slowly after the parliamentary framework disappeared in 1772. French did in fact become the official language of internal diplomatic communication later, but this was a result of the new, francophone Bernadotte dynasty.⁹⁷

Alongside the shifting forms of government in the eighteenth century, other factors should be taken into consideration. The occasional use of French in diplomatic reports can be juxtaposed with francophone tendencies in Swedish society at large. In doing so, not only is the increasingly strong position of French relevant, but so too were counter-reactions to the perceived French influence on Swedish subjects and the Swedish language. Several eighteenth-century literary works presented caricatures of the French or of Swedes imitating the French,⁹⁸ while both literary and scholarly efforts were made to facilitate the use of Swedish in contexts where it had hitherto not been used.

Those criticising foreign influences on the Swedish language and on Swedes did not, however, always reject entirely the use of foreign words or foreign languages. Cases such as Gyllenborg's famous play rather painted a positive picture of someone using French moderately. Even Carl Rudenschöld, whose diplomatic reports transgressed the official linguistic practice, later spoke of the importance of using a natural Swedish cleansed of unnecessary foreign influence while simultaneously warning against an overzealous criticism of foreign loanwords.⁹⁹ From this perspective, the ways most diplomats reported—using mainly Swedish and only occasionally French—could be seen as a form of self-regulation and a skilful bilingualism. Their language choices followed the official practice but were also a reflection of a culture that valued well-judged language choices and accepted a certain level of code-switching.

The use of French amongst Swedish diplomats can also be compared to francophone tendencies amongst other diplomatic corps. Looking at the absence of French in the internal communication of Spanish diplomats, for example, Swedish diplomats appear as highly francophone.¹⁰⁰ In Russia, a rescript signed by Catherine II in 1787 mirrored the circular letter mandated by the Swedish Diet in 1742. Both cases were, to a certain extent, reactions to the influence of the francophonie of the social

and political elite from which diplomats were recruited. In Sweden and Russia, the governments limited this influence sooner or later. In Prussia, Frederick II did the opposite, changing the language of internal diplomatic communication from German to French.¹⁰¹ A similar shift would not have been possible in Sweden as long as the diplomatic correspondence was monitored by the Diet. It did, however, not happen under Gustav III either, which testifies to a longer tradition of language policy efforts strengthening the position of Swedish within the state administration from the seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century.

Swedish diplomats, thus, found themselves in the intersection between domestic language policy tendencies and the transnational, francophone communication patterns within eighteenth-century diplomacy. Their correspondence testifies to an ongoing balance between top-down language policy requirements within the framework of the early-modern state and the allure of an “international” prestige language which was also the language of diplomatic negotiation and communication.

Notes

- 1 RA, R 2810, Secret Committee, minutes Dec 30, 1742. Dates are according to the Swedish calendar (old style before 1753).
- 2 RA, R 2810, Secret Committee, minutes Dec 30, 1742; Westrin, “Några iakttagelser angående franskan”, 331.
- 3 In 1742, he wrote to the chancellery president mostly twice a week, sometimes skipping one mail. From mid-August to the end of the year, for example, he sent a total of 33 letters, all of which were in Swedish apart from a couple of letters entirely or partially in French.
- 4 On the rise of French as a diplomatic language, see, e.g., Schmidt-Rösler, “Die ‘Sprachen des Friedens’”, and Penzholz & Schmidt-Rösler, “Die Sprachen des Friedens”. On the wider, cultural European Francophonie, see Argent et al., “European Francophonie”.
- 5 See, e.g., Wolff, *Vänskap och makt*; Östman, “French in Sweden”; von Proschwitz, “Rayonnement de la langue”; Björkman, “De la guerre de Trente Ans”; Härmä, “Le français et le suédois”; from the perspective of foreign patronage, Lindström & Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*; regarding cultural and artistic contacts, often facilitated by diplomats, see e.g. Hinnners, *De fransöske handtwerkarne*; Bernard-Folliot, “Relations et échanges artistiques”.
- 6 Hammar, “*La Française*”, 9.
- 7 Regarding influence on syntax, see Stenfors, *Svenska på franskt manér*. For examples of French loanwords in Swedish, see Östman, “French in Sweden”, 300–301; Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, 443. Further illustrating the francophonie amongst the Swedish elite is the role played by French after the eastern part of the realm, present-day Finland, became a grand duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809. In Finland, French functioned as a *lingua franca* between the local, mostly suecophone elite and the Russian authorities, since neither could speak the other language, but both parties were well-versed in French (Härmä, “Le français et le suédois”).
- 8 Westrin, “Några iakttagelser angående franskan”. Westrin’s overview covers the period from the seventeenth century to 1813 and focuses on both external and internal communication, without however exploring either topic in detail.
- 9 The topic is treated rarely or not at all in Tunberg et al., *Histoire de l’administration*; Rosén, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*; Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*; Romefors, *Arkivguide*. An exception is Heiko Droste’s study on the seventeenth-century diplomatic corps, which also explores internal language choices; Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*.

- 10 On Russia see Rjéoutski et al., "French as a Diplomatic and Official Language", 457–458. On Spain see Vladislav Rjéoutski's chapter in this volume.
- 11 Wright, *Language Policy and Language Planning*, e.g. 43.
- 12 See Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*; Teleman, *Ära, rikedom och reda*.
- 13 All archival sources used for this chapter are found at the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), in Stockholm.
- 14 On the diplomatic representation during the war, see Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 225–234.
- 15 Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, 27–28.
- 16 Forssell, "Histoire de l'administration", 353–354.
- 17 The double role and responsibility of the commission secretary was a subject for debate throughout the period, see Forssell, "Histoire de l'administration", 334–337; Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 228–229.
- 18 On Sweden's multilingual foreign affairs, especially the relatively strong position of Latin, see, Schmidt-Rösler, "Die 'Sprachen des Friedens'", 245, 251–251; Holm, "Multilingual Foreign Affairs". On the use of German as a diplomatic language in the Baltic Sea region, see Burkhardt, "Sprachen des Friedens", 517.
- 19 Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 193.
- 20 Instructions issued for the Chancellery in 1719, *Samling af instructioner*, 381.
- 21 In theory, only a very limited number of high positions within the state administration were officially reserved for the nobility. However, the legal framework for appointments was vague enough to enable a prioritisation of nobles in practice. Elmroth, *Nyrekryteringen till de högre ämbetena*, 54–55.
- 22 Hammar, "La Française", especially 12–13, 16–17. On the Swedish elite's travels to France, see Wolff, *Vänskap och makt*, especially 62–80.
- 23 Research is currently being done at the University of Lund by Emma Forsberg, whose comments have been very helpful for this essay.
- 24 Elmroth, *Nyrekryteringen till de högre ämbetena*, 245–248. Similar tendencies can be observed among the diplomatic corps: out of eleven diplomats in charge of the permanent diplomatic mission in Copenhagen, eight had been enrolled at university (the rest had a military background). Among the thirteen diplomats in charge in Moscow/St. Petersburg, the proportion was lower (at least six), perhaps as a result of military backgrounds being prioritised for a posting with military importance.
- 25 Frohnert, "Administration i Sverige under frihetstiden", 206; Cavallin, *I kungens och folkets tjänst*, 83–85. Specific exams for certain branches of the central administration were later added, such as an exam for officials of the Chancellery (*kansliexamen*), to which diplomats belonged.
- 26 Professors gradually switched from giving lectures in Latin to giving them in Swedish during the first half of the century but continued to use Latin until late in the century in certain subjects; Tengström, *Latinet i Sverige*, 81–82. The consistory in Lund even held its assemblies in Latin, although the minutes were written in Swedish; Teleman, *Ära, rikedom och reda*, 21. Concerning the fact that dissertations were mainly written in Latin, see Lindberg, *De lärdes modersmål*, 101.
- 27 Hammar, "La Française", 70–75; Glück, *Die Fremdsprache Deutsch*, 467.
- 28 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 86. Since Droste includes diplomats from Sweden's Baltic provinces and German territories among diplomats with a foreign origin, it should be noted that 20% of the diplomats of German origin (Germans represented 44% of all diplomats) actually came from Sweden's German territories; Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 87.
- 29 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 163.
- 30 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 86.
- 31 Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 234.
- 32 Wolff, "Le cosmopolitisme aristocratique".
- 33 Wolff, "Le cosmopolitisme aristocratique", *Vänskap och makt*, 41; Härmä, "Le français et le suédois".

- 34 This was mainly due to the fact that Charles XII corresponded with Swedish diplomats from the battlefield. Diplomats were instructed to send reports both to the Chancellery in Stockholm and to the field chancellery, but all important matters were decided by the latter. New instructions for the Chancellery further strengthened Charles XII's control over foreign affairs in 1713. See Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 202–203, 212–213.
- 35 Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, 26–27.
- 36 Romefors, *Arkivguide*, 25.
- 37 Forssell, "Histoire de l'administration", 243–244.
- 38 Concerning the Secret Committee's access to diplomatic correspondence, see Naumann, *Om sekreta utskottet*, 83.
- 39 Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan", 331.
- 40 Hammar, "*La Française*", 17.
- 41 Östman, "French in Sweden".
- 42 Teleman, *Åra, rikedom och reda*, 34.
- 43 Hammar, "*La Française*", 11.
- 44 Lindberg, *De lärdes modersmål*, 101, 108.
- 45 "[...] det tillförene resolverat är, att ministrerne skohla skrifa sine bref på Svenska [...]": R 2810, Secret Committee, minutes Dec 30, 1742.
- 46 Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan".
- 47 This is difficult to verify, since the registers of the minutes of the Secret Committee mainly cover persons, foreign powers and important foreign affairs issues but not minor decisions, like decisions regarding internal communication.
- 48 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 163–165.
- 49 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, especially 192, 431, 438.
- 50 R 2810, Secret Committee, minutes Nov 3 and 4, 1742.
- 51 "[...] H Riksrådet förmåhler detta brefwet allenast warit en avertissement och blått kundskap till Wasenberg, om det samtahl han dagen förut haft med Engelska ministern [...], förmåhlandes H Riksrådet jämwähl att samma bref woro skrifwit på fransyska som alltid skier när han enskylt skrifer om en och annan underrättelse, men enär något bref afgår på befallning eller anginge sådant som ifrån Hans M:t kommo skriftit det eij allenast på swänska, utan och blifwa de brefen alltid förut Secrete utskåttet communi-cerade": R 2810, Secret Committee, minutes Nov 4, 1742.
- 52 See e.g. Gyllenborg to Palmstierna Jan 4, 1743, *Diplomatica Danica* 195. In fact, Rudenschöld had already been advised not to write in French by the former president Arvid Horn in 1731 with the reason that otherwise the letters had to be translated into Swedish and, likewise, with reference to "public matters" having to be communicated in Swedish; Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan", 331.
- 53 My translation from Swedish. Gyllenborg to Wasenberg Jan 4, 1743, *Diplomatica Anglica* 307.
- 54 Concerning "public" referring to "the state or a greater community" in a Swedish context, see Christensen-Nugues, "Only to the Benefit of Some Private Persons", 24; for a German and European context see Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit", 425–426. The words used to describe non-public content in diplomatic correspondence were *enskylt* in Swedish (see above) and *particulier* in French (see below), translated here as "private/privately". The word *privat* and its Latin counterparts (*privatus*, *in privato* etc.) existed in Swedish but were not commonly used and often had economic connotations; Christensen-Nugues, "Only to the Benefit of Some Private Persons", 22; Nauman & Vogt, "The Private in the Public", 2. Although *enskild/enskilt* can be translated as individual/separate (as in Christensen-Nugues, "Only to the Benefit of Some Private Persons"), in the context discussed here "private" is a more appropriate translation and also one that corresponds to historical uses in Swedish, see "*enskild*" in *Svenska Akademiens ordbok*.

- 55 The corresponding *Diplomatica* collections are *Danica* (hereinafter DD), *Muscovitica* (hereinafter DM), *Gallica* (hereinafter DG), *Anglica* (hereinafter DA), *Germanica/Wien* (hereinafter DGW), *Brandenburgico-Borussica* (hereinafter DBB) and *Germanica/Hamburg* (hereinafter DGH). The selection was made with the objective of covering courts and cities of importance for Swedish diplomacy specifically or European diplomacy in general, both in the Baltic Sea region and further afield. Cities without permanent representation from the start of the period have been excluded, as have several smaller legations in German cities.
- 56 Mainly Thomas Knipercrona's reports from Russia 1700–1712 (DM 124) and Johan Fredrik König's reports from Hamburg 1739–1758 (DGH 862) and 1736–1747 (DGH 863), as well as some other volumes exceeding five years.
- 57 As a rule, volumes have been selected for the first years of a decade with some flexibility to include as many different diplomats as possible. In the Danish correspondence, there is no sample from the 1710s, since diplomatic relations with Denmark were interrupted in 1709 (Munthe, "L'administration des affaires étrangères", 230). The samples represent permanent diplomatic missions and the diplomat in charge of the mission. Special missions and peace negotiations as well as lower-ranking diplomats have mainly been left out. In most cases, all reports in one volume are written by the same diplomat. Sometimes there are additional reports by a lower-ranking member of the legation.
- 58 For von Strahlenheim, see Karlsson, "Henning Strahlenheim, von"; for Rothlieb, see Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* VI, 542.
- 59 For Storren see Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 410. A small collection of documents concerning Storren in Riksarkivet's biographical collection, e.g. concerning his remuneration, shows him using German also when writing about personal requests; *Biographica* 1500t–1800t, S 84.
- 60 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*.
- 61 See DD 138. The volume covers the period 1719–1723, but letters in German are confined to a couple of months during the autumn of 1719 and winter 1720–1721. During the rest of the period, Adlerfelt wrote in Swedish with the exception of a few letters in French.
- 62 In addition to the samples included in the table, one could also mention Thure Bielke, who was sent on a relatively short mission to Vienna in the same period as the resident von Höpken. Bielke wrote to *Kungl. Maj:t* in Swedish and to the president entirely in French; DGW 349 and 350.
- 63 Samples in which a diplomat uses both Swedish and German are very few. One such case is Caspar Joachim Ringwicht, who wrote to *Kungl. Maj:t* in German, Swedish, and French when he was still a secretary in Vienna. His letters to the president in the same period are, however, only in German and French, implying a preference for German over Swedish; see DGW 390 (1721–1731) and DGW 391 (1721–1738) (not included in the table). This linguistic preference is further implied by biographical documents, such as requests for advancements or remuneration, in which Ringwicht mostly used German and only rarely Swedish. Ringwicht's background is relatively unknown. He refers to himself as a native subject of the Swedish king and was, according to his own account, granted nobility first by the king of Sweden and later by the Emperor. See the documents concerning Ringwicht in *Biographica* 1500t–1800t, R 18 a. It seems likely that he came from Sweden's German territories.
- 64 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* IV, 276–277.
- 65 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* III, 789–790.
- 66 Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan", 334.
- 67 The number of samples from Hamburg and Berlin is, of course, limited. It is also possible that there would have been more cases of individual diplomats writing in German if more German cities and courts had been included. However, the general picture

- implies that the proportion of German samples was very low compared to the seventeenth century.
- 68 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* I, 41–43.
 - 69 Regarding Zöge von Manteuffel, see Hofberg, *Svenskt biografiskt handlexikon*, 766.
 - 70 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 163.
 - 71 Bielke to *Kungl. Maj:t* 1719–21, DGW 349 (not included in the table).
 - 72 This is in line with research on bilingualism in written sources, such as J. N. Adams' conclusions concerning language switches between letter bodies and letter subscriptions in papyrus letters during Antiquity; Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, 396–399.
 - 73 Reenstierna to *Kungl. Maj:t* April 1 and July 27, 1720, DGH 804.
 - 74 Von Höpken to Gyllenborg May 6/17, 1744, DD 218.
 - 75 Gyllenborg to Wasenberg Nov 2, 1742, DA 307.
 - 76 “Monsieur. En reponse à Votre lettre du 5. November [sic!] je n’ay a vous donner que des idées particulieres et c’est sur ce pied que vous aurés à prendre toutes les lettres que je vous ecris en françois”: Gyllenborg to Wasenberg Nov 23, 1742, DA 307.
 - 77 “Comme j’avois deja hier achevé la lettre ci jointe à Votre Excellence, je fus á même d’apprendre une circonstance, dont j’ai crú de mon devoir Monseigneur, de Vous informer en particulier, et comme le Docteur háte fort le moment de son départ, Votre Excellence agréera la liberté que je me donne de la joinde en Apostille”: Barck to Gyllenborg Jan 12, 1745 (postscript to a letter dated Jan 11, 1745), DM 245. There are some letters in French in the succeeding months and in one Barck makes reference to the “autres lettres particulieres que depuis un têmes je me suis donné la liberté de lui ecrire”, which might explain them. See Barck to Gyllenborg March 1, 1745 in the same volume.
 - 78 DGW 363. The preserved letters from Tessin’s mission to Vienna in 1725–1726 are only twenty in total, most of which are written in Swedish apart from three in French.
 - 79 See Wilhelm Sprengtporten to the president, DD 277; especially letters March 18 (in Swedish), 18 (in French), 21 (in French), 25 (in French) and 25 (in Swedish), 1762.
 - 80 “Je vous reponde sans perte de tems et en françois, a fin que vous puissies lire ma reponse a ce Ministre”: Gyllenborg to Wasenberg March 26, 1742, DA 307.
 - 81 “[...] sade han at det K. Danska hofwet tänkte om denna förändringen |: såsom hans egne orden lydde |: que les choses sont retombées par là dans la situation, ou elles devoient naturellement venir”: von Höpken to *Kanslikollegium* (collectively) Dec 11, 1740, DD 184. For a similar short passage directly quoting Schulin in French, see von Höpken on May 3, 1744, when he had been promoted to minister. In this case, the quote was from a conversation between Schulin and the French chargé d’affaires in Copenhagen: DD 218.
 - 82 Postscript to d’Albedyhll’s dispatch June 14, 1782 (the actual dispatch is missing), DM 396.
 - 83 See, e.g., a letter (in Swedish) by Palmstierna, in which he mentioned that he would have liked to write his report in French, “if he had dared” (my translation), since there was a chance that it would be read to the French ambassador in Stockholm: Palmstierna to Gyllenborg Jan 14, 1742, DD 183.
 - 84 Rudenschöld to Gyllenborg Dec 18, 1742, DBB 83.
 - 85 See copies of the letters in French from Schulin attached to von Höpken’s letter to *Kungl. Maj:t* July 18, 1745 and June 5, 1746, DD 216. In the latter case, the letter also contains a formal writing in the name of the Danish Majesty by Schulin in German, which highlights the fact that French was rather an informal choice in this communication.
 - 86 See copies of a letter from Bernstorff to Sprengtporten attached to Sprengtporten’s letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* March 3, 1763 and Sept 5, 1765, DD 274.

- 87 See DA 256, which consists entirely of letters from English authorities to Sparre and Skutenhielm.
- 88 According to Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*, 165, starting in the 1690s.
- 89 See letters from various Swedish legations in DA, 178.
- 90 See letters from other Swedish diplomats to Reenstierna 1720–1729 in DGH, 817–818.
- 91 See letters from various Swedish legations to Palmstierna in Copenhagen 1740–1742/43, DD, 200–202, and similar letters to von Höpken, 1744–1748, DD, 227–229.
- 92 This scale could also be applied to another form of informal correspondence not discussed here, namely private correspondence between diplomats abroad and their peers in Stockholm. A famous case is the envoy Carl Fredrik Scheffer's letters (all in French) concerning cultural news from Paris to Tessin and Claes Ekeblad in Stockholm, both former Swedish diplomats in Paris. See Wolff, "Voyageurs et diplomates scandinaves", 378. Scheffer's letters to Tessin 1744–52 have been published by Jan Heidner: Scheffer, *Lettres particulières*.
- 93 Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*.
- 94 Cf. Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan".
- 95 The question was, thus, not a mere difference between official matters and an "intimate" content, to quote Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan".
- 96 See Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone*; Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*; Teleman, *Ära, rikeedom och reda*.
- 97 Westrin, "Några iakttagelser angående franskan", 333.
- 98 Östman, "French in Sweden", 303–304. For examples besides Gyllenborg's *Swenska språthöken* mentioned above, see Östman & Östman, *Au champ d'Apollon*, 28–30.
- 99 See Rudenschöld's speech to the Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1772: Rudenschöld, *Tal om svenska språkets art och nu varande bruk*.
- 100 See Vladislav Rjéoutski's chapter in this volume.
- 101 See Tatjana Trautmann's chapter in this volume.

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DA, vol. 235 Letters to the Chancellery President 1719–1721.

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Carl Magnus Wasenberg

DA, vol. 275 Letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* 1742–1743.

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Caspar Joachim Ringwicht

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Lars von Engeström

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Anders Leijonstedt and J. H. Storren

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Carl Posse

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Carl Rudenschöld

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O. J. Zöge von Manteuffel

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Carl von Carisien

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Anders Leijonkloo

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Per Adlerfelt

DD, vol. 136 Letters to *Kungl. Maj:t* 1719–1723.

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Nils Örnecrona

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Otto Fleming

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Claes Ekeblad

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7 An Empire on the Wane? Language Use and Linguistic Policy in Eighteenth-Century Spanish Diplomacy*

Vladislav Rjéoutski

In a seminal article entitled “Diplomatic culture in old regime Europe” (2009), Hamish Scott emphasized language as a central factor in the dissemination of a “novel”, “cohesive”, and “homogeneous” diplomatic culture across the European continent in the early modern period, which “imparted considerable unity to the conduct of international affairs”. However, measuring the precise role of language in the spread of diplomatic practices in Europe in comparison to other factors is challenging. Such an exploration requires a comprehensive examination of diplomatic linguistic practices, which is still a desideratum, as emphasized by Hamish Scott in the same article.¹

Spain presents a “particularly difficult case”, according to Scott,² as its diplomatic linguistic practices seem to deviate from the language-use patterns of other major European powers such as Great Britain, Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy, and Russia, particularly in the use of French as a pan-European *lingua franca*. Furthermore, the study of language use in Spanish diplomacy has received even less attention than that of its European counterparts.³

The objective of this study is to provide an overview of the use of languages in Spanish diplomacy, mainly during the eighteenth century, given the significance of this period in shaping language practices in Spanish diplomacy.

Considering the extensive volume of available documentation and the lengthy period under examination, this survey constitutes an initial exploration of the topic. The research draws heavily on unpublished materials sourced from various archives, primarily from the Spanish National Historical Archives in Madrid and the General Archives in Simancas.⁴ Additionally, I have consulted the French National Archives (ANF), the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet, Stockholm), the Archives of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI) in Moscow, the Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library (St Petersburg), and

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the National Archives of the UK in Kew Gardens. Despite the inclusion of several hundred documents in the corpus, statistical methods may not be applicable due to a large variety of genres of diplomatic correspondence. Therefore, the conclusions drawn will rely on the qualitative analysis of consulted documents, supported by similar cases observed in the archival research.

In this essay, I deal exclusively with the relations between Spain and the European countries in which Spain had diplomatic representation. All linguistic interactions between the Spaniards and indigenous populations in the New World remain outside the scope of my exploration. The article examines the use of languages by Spanish diplomats in both internal (between Spanish diplomats themselves) and external (with diplomats from other countries) diplomatic correspondence, and in informal exchanges, such as personal correspondence and interactions with informers. Communication in formal contexts, such as royal letters and audiences at court, as well as negotiations at peace congresses,⁵ are excluded from the survey due to their symbolic nature and the significant influence of tradition on language choice. However, for a comprehensive understanding of language choices in eighteenth-century Spanish diplomacy, the everyday diplomatic correspondence examined in this study must be compared with royal correspondence and the use of languages during audiences.⁶

The article begins with an outline of language learning in early modern Spain, including in the milieu of the nobility, among whom diplomats, especially at higher ranks, were typically selected. This outline is followed by an equally brief overview of the organisation of early modern Spanish diplomacy, highlighting issues concerning its personnel and focusing particularly on language proficiency challenges. The article then analyses language use within everyday diplomatic correspondence, examines written interactions with spies and informers, and finally explores the personal correspondence of specific Spanish diplomats.

Language Policies, Debates, and Learning in Early Modern Spain and Europe

In the sixteenth century, with the enormous expansion of its territory both in America and in Europe, the Spanish kingdom became a world empire. Nebrija's phrase in his grammar of Castilian ("the language was always a companion to the empire") had practically no resonance at the time.⁸ Nevertheless, Nebrija clearly anticipated the upcoming changes and the new role that Castilian was destined to play. As Spanish territories extended their reach, Castilian grew in significance on the Iberian Peninsula and beyond, both in Europe and in the New World.⁹

Language practices in Spanish diplomacy should be considered against the background of the linguistic policies of the early modern Spanish kingdom. One language policy that Spanish theorists of the seventeenth century advocated for was promoting Castilian as a *lingua franca* among the American colonies of Spain, which would simplify the interactions between the indigenous populations and the Spanish authorities and help to impose a Spanish way of life, customs, and Catholicism among the indigenous people. These ideas were confronted with

another policy, supported by the Catholic Church and the Crown, which advocated for Catholic priests' use of the "general language" of these populations (Quechua) to preach Catholicism more effectively. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century did the Bourbons begin to promote the politics of forceful Castilianisation in their territories in the New World.¹⁰

However, within the state administration, the policy of official monolingualism, characteristic of modern states in general, started much earlier. It is unclear whether the status of Castilian as a state language within the kingdom and its expansion beyond its borders were influenced by sixteenth-century debates on the role and the significance of the vernacular. Castilian was described by Spanish sixteenth-century humanists at least as Latin's equal, if not superior. Many sixteenth-century authors rebelled against the subjugation of Castilian to Latin, rejecting traditional linguistic hierarchies and even challenging notions of linguistic filiation. This discourse on the autonomy of Castilian was accompanied by the mythification of a past in which a free people, the ancestors of the Spanish, resisted the Latin oppressor and the imposition of an exogenous language.¹¹ This process was unfolding against the backdrop of a rising interest in vernaculars in general¹² in many parts of Europe. Signs of this interest included the creation of chairs for modern languages in some German universities, the foundation of private academies and language schools and the presence of a multitude of language teachers in various parts of Europe.¹³

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the growing interest in Castilian—now commonly referred to as Spanish—in Europe, driven by Spain's expanding commercial and cultural exchanges and the country's image in Europe, shaped by its literary, cultural, religious, and courtly life.¹⁴ The spread of Spanish in the Holy Roman Empire in the sixteenth century was facilitated by the marriages of princesses from the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs with members of the Austrian branch. As Rubén González Cuerva demonstrates, this process was accompanied not only by the influence of Spanish-style clothing at the imperial court but also by some dissemination of Spanish language knowledge among courtiers and within imperial diplomatic circles, which frequently provided services to the household of the empresses and members of the Spanish royal family.¹⁵ In the seventeenth century, Spanish continued to be regarded at the Viennese court as a prestigious language, associated with the defence of Catholicism and promising career prospects.¹⁶

Many Spanish grammars, manuals and dictionaries, published mostly outside Spain (Denmark, England, Italian states, the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, etc.), often by non-Spanish authors, testify to the spread of Spanish learning in Europe.¹⁷ The analysis of this book production shows that its target audience was highly diverse, including courtiers, tradesmen, travellers, soldiers, and ladies.

In France, despite complicated relations with Spain, a genuine enthusiasm for Spanish in court circles as well as scholarly and other milieus also resulted in the publication of many Spanish manuals and dialogues, some of which underwent dozens of editions.¹⁸ They often referred to Spanish literature or guided the traveller across Spain,¹⁹ benefitting from the curiosity sparked by travel accounts.²⁰

At the same time, within Spain, possibly due to the country's position as a world power and the role its language played in Europe, language learning hardly developed. Latin (and, to some extent, Greek) was the only exception, because university teaching was delivered in this language.²¹ Spanish universities, unlike German ones, did not incorporate modern languages in their curriculum and were constantly criticised by the "Ilustrados" for their ignorance of new trends and useful knowledge. Although personalities close to the Spanish court recognised the importance of teaching modern languages, this programme was not implemented at the time in large educational institutions of the Spanish crown.²² Despite close ties between the Spanish and the imperial courts, German was never learned by Spanish courtiers, reflecting Vienna's limited cultural influence in Spain and perhaps also a desire of the Spanish court to emphasise the political supremacy of the senior branch of the family over the junior one.²³ Before the eighteenth century, only Italian was sometimes known, though often imperfectly, by Spanish noblemen.²⁴

Interest in living foreign languages and especially in French began to widen in Spain from the second half of the eighteenth century,²⁵ much later than in the rest of Europe and approximately at the same time as on the European periphery, in Russia.²⁶ The teaching of living foreign languages started developing particularly after 1767, when the Jesuits were expelled from Spain and Charles III of Spain implemented reforms that placed the universities under the control of the royal power. New high schools independent of the university system included modern languages in their curriculum²⁷ and numerous "private academies" offering French appeared in Spain. In the last third of the century, these developments led to a new attitude towards foreign languages in Spanish society, based not only on their social value (such as in the case of French among nobles), but also on their practical and professional utility.²⁸

This context had an impact on Spanish diplomacy, as demonstrated in the following section.

Spanish Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century: Personnel and 'Professionalisation'

At the end of the reign of Charles II (died 1700), Spain had diplomatic relations with 10 states, located only in Europe (in alphabetical order): Austria, France, England, Genoa, Portugal, Rome, Savoy, Switzerland, Venice, and the United Provinces. After the accession of Philippe V of Bourbon to the Spanish throne (1700) and during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1715), relations with many countries were cut, but they were subsequently re-established. By the end of the reign of Ferdinand VI (1759) Spain maintained its missions in 15 countries. Apart from those mentioned above (and with the exception of Savoy), these countries were: Denmark, Naples, Parma, Sardinia, Sweden, and Tuscany.²⁹ With some countries, e.g. Great Britain and Russia, relations were irregular.

The institution charged with foreign policy questions (peace and war, alliances, commerce with other countries, etc.) was the State Council (*Consejo de Estado*), founded by Charles V in the sixteenth century.³⁰ In the first part of the eighteenth

century, the post of the head of the State Council was occupied mostly by officials who lacked extensive experience in the field of foreign policy and did not spend much time outside Spain. Starting in the 1740s, the post was assigned to people such as Carvajal, Wall, Jerónimo Grimaldi, and the Count of Floridablanca, all of whom were experienced diplomats.

The situation with foreign languages in Spain, summarised in the previous section, was mirrored in a clear imbalance between the language proficiency of foreign diplomats coming to Spain and of Spanish diplomats going to other countries, at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the former were mostly knowledgeable in Spanish and some other European languages, the latter often did not possess the necessary linguistic skills. On the one hand, individuals such as Adam von Dietrichstein, Hans Khevenhüller, and Count Franz Eusebius von Pötting, all of whom represented the court of Vienna in Spain, or Sir Francis Cottington, the English envoy and *chargé d'affaires* in Spain, who was described as a “Hispaniolised Englishman”, were not exceptional among foreign diplomats at the Spanish court.³¹ On the other hand, a lack of knowledge of foreign languages was a constant feature of Spanish representatives at the Viennese court before the eighteenth century.³² Some of them had a basic grasp of Latin and Italian, the latter being particularly useful at the Viennese court where it was widely known.³³ French was also known to some Spanish diplomats. For example, two Spanish diplomats at the English court, Carlos Coloma (in England in the 1620s) and Pedro Ronquillo Briceño (in England in the 1670s–1680s), sometimes wrote to their English counterparts in French.³⁴ However, even in the mid-eighteenth century, Spanish Foreign Minister Carvajal complained that Spanish aristocrats were not well educated, and that they ignored foreign languages and were not ready to go abroad.³⁵

To some extent, the presence of several foreigners in Spanish foreign affairs compensated for the shortage of qualified personnel, particularly in the first half of the eighteenth century. This phenomenon could be explained by the political difficulties that Philip V, grandson of the French King Louis XIV, encountered—particularly the war of the Spanish Succession, which provoked numerous resignations among Spanish officials, as well as the arrival in Spain of the new Spanish queen, Elisabeth Farnese, born into the family of the Duke of Parma, followed by many Italians. Diplomacy was by no means the only field of state administration in which the number of foreigners was noticeable. For example, according to Fernando Sanchez Marcos, 35% (in 1711) to 45% (in 1733) of all general officers in the Spanish army were of foreign origin; based on their names, the majority of those officers were Italian and French.³⁶ According to Didier Ozanam, during the reigns of Philippe V (1700–1746) and Ferdinand VI (1746–1759), out of 69 heads of Spanish diplomatic missions approximately 23% were born in foreign countries, mostly in various Italian states not subject to Spanish monarchs (nine), France (three, they were Jacobites), and Holland (two).³⁷ These numbers may seem considerable; however, they are relativised by the much more important share of foreigners in Swedish diplomacy in the seventeenth century and probably may be better compared to the share of foreigners in eighteenth-century Russian diplomacy.³⁸

Professional training, including a strong command of foreign languages, among Spanish diplomats was an exception, especially before the 1760s. In this regard, the situation with translators and language secretaries is revealing. In Venice, the training of young men in oriental languages dates back to the 1550s, the French founded their school of “*jeunes de langues*” in 1669, the Russians developed their training system in the first quarter of the eighteenth century,³⁹ and Spanish diplomats attempted to set up a similar programme only in the second half of the century, urged by the pressing need for translation⁴⁰ and by the examples of several other nations that had established schools for translators in Constantinople.⁴¹

The same need for ‘professionalisation’ was felt at the highest level. According to D. Ozanam, before the 1760s only a small minority of heads of diplomatic missions had some experience in the field prior to being appointed: only five of the total of 77 heads of post (6.5%) appointed between 1700 and 1759 had previous experience in diplomacy. This number would increase to 25 out of 90 (27.8%) in the following period, 1760–1808, which hints at a growing specialisation.⁴²

D. Ozanam adds another important criterion, namely experience of stays abroad. Out of 164 heads of Spanish diplomatic missions (not including the consulates) in the eighteenth century, only four seem to have made educational trips (Grand Tour) in their youth.⁴³ This was also the case at lower levels: the clerks (*oficiales*) of the offices (*mesas*) of the Secretary of State, including the first clerk (*oficial mayor*), had hardly any experience of stays abroad; out of 22 clerks who were active from 1700 to 1746, none had been abroad.⁴⁴

The lack of experience of living abroad inevitably impacted the linguistic skills of these diplomats and prevented the introduction of French among Spanish nobles, while in some other countries French became a vital communication tool for nobility, one of the best examples being the Russian high nobility starting from the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ In this regard, it is certainly not accidental that even Spanish diplomats who belonged to the aristocracy and had a strong command of French did not use it in their private correspondence with their countrymen.⁴⁶

Spanish and Foreign Diplomats and Their Linguistic Contacts

As with other European diplomats, the Spanish not only represented their monarch but also regularly communicated local political news to their minister, or the state secretary. Moreover, they corresponded with diplomats from other countries and with numerous agents and informers across Europe. “Vertical” correspondence between Spanish diplomats and their minister and “horizontal” correspondence between Spanish diplomats posted at different foreign courts might be called “internal” diplomatic correspondence and I will use this term hereafter.

In many European countries, diplomats used their vernacular language in their internal diplomatic correspondence, as English diplomats usually did in both vertical and horizontal correspondence, with some notable exceptions.⁴⁷ However, in some parts of Europe, linguistic diplomatic practices started to change. Some Swedish diplomats used French in their internal correspondence as early as the end of the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ In June 1740, by order of Frederick II, French became

the main medium for internal correspondence in Prussian diplomacy.⁴⁹ Again in the 1740s, a Bavarian diplomat in Russia corresponded mainly in French with other German diplomats in Europe.⁵⁰ Furthermore, some Russian diplomats began using French in their internal diplomatic correspondence also in the first part of the eighteenth century, but rather timidly as an exception to the tacit rule of using Russian in this context.⁵¹ In the second half of the century and particularly during the reign of Catherine II, French started to be used by many Russian diplomats in their correspondence with their superiors in St. Petersburg and, not infrequently, by the head and the deputy head (Chancellor and Vice-chancellor) of Foreign Affairs, for example in circular letters concerning international affairs.⁵² The reason for choosing French in such cases was partly social and cultural and partly practical: arguments had to be presented in the language that diplomats would most likely use in conversations with their counterparts (i.e., French).

What about Spanish diplomats? Even a quick review of the Spanish internal diplomatic correspondence shows that it was conducted almost exclusively in Spanish, as English diplomats used English.⁵³ It is true that Spanish diplomats could send documents in other languages. The circulation of documents in the Spanish diplomatic network in Europe was largely impacted by the linguistic situation in diplomacy in general: most of the documents sent as attachments by Spanish diplomats to Madrid were written in French.⁵⁴

Spanish diplomats corresponded in Spanish not only with their minister,⁵⁵ but also with their fellow compatriots posted in various European countries. Here are just two examples. First, in 1732, the Spanish ambassador to France, Baltasar Patiño y Rosales, Marquis of Castélar, received letters from Spanish diplomats posted in Brussels, Florence, Genoa, The Hague, Lisbon, London, Venice, Vienna and other cities. All these letters were in Spanish.⁵⁶ The second example, more than 30 years later, in the late 1760s and early 1770s, is provided by the correspondence of the Spanish ambassador to London, Vittorio Filippo Prince of Masserano, with his colleagues posted in Copenhagen, The Hague, Lisbon, Paris, Parma, Rome, St. Petersburg, Turin, and Vienna. All these exchanges were also in Spanish and all the correspondents, apart from Masserano,⁵⁷ were clearly of Spanish origin.⁵⁸ From a pan-European perspective, such monolingualism is even more striking because, as I emphasised above, already at the end of the seventeenth century to the first half of the eighteenth century, the use of French was becoming rather common in the “horizontal” correspondence of European diplomats, less official than their exchanges with their minister or monarch.

Interestingly, the correspondence of Spanish diplomats seldom contained any commentary on the use of Spanish as the main and, with rare exceptions, the only medium of internal diplomatic correspondence.⁵⁹ This could be considered a normal situation because the language choice was certainly obvious for everyone; this situation can be compared to that of Russian diplomats from the 1720s–1730s, who sometimes used French in their internal correspondence written predominantly in Russian and apologised for it, feeling that they were transgressing a sort of rule.⁶⁰ The absence of such comments may signal a deeply rooted linguistic tradition that was not or could not be questioned.

If the internal correspondence of Spanish diplomats was monolingual, were their exchanges with other European diplomats multilingual? Let us first look at an earlier period from the viewpoint of European diplomats.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, most European diplomats regularly used Spanish in their correspondence with their Spanish colleagues, sometimes in competition with other languages, generally Latin, which tended to be used in more formal contexts. This was the case for Polish diplomats who often wrote to the Spanish Foreign Minister in Spanish and used Latin or sometimes Italian when the letters were signed by Polish monarchs or senators.⁶¹ Similarly, Swedish diplomats systematically used Spanish in their everyday correspondence with the Spanish court, but they preferred Latin in more official exchanges. Danish diplomats followed the same pattern. French cropped up rarely, for example in exchanges between English and Spanish diplomats.⁶² Spanish was also regularly used by the representatives of Italian sovereigns in Spain as well as the Republic of Venice.⁶³ Furthermore, the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Electoral Palatinate also used Spanish when addressing Spanish officials, though, at a higher level, Holy Roman emperors often resorted to Italian.⁶⁴

Two countries stood as an exception. The States General of the Netherlands wrote (and sent various memoirs) to Spanish diplomats and to the Spanish monarch mainly in French and not in Spanish, thus linguistically underpinning their political independence from the Spanish crown.⁶⁵ Russian diplomats visiting Spain in the seventeenth century typically had no expertise in foreign languages and had to rely on their interpreters, who knew Latin but did not have any proficiency in Spanish, as exemplified by the visit of a significant Russian mission to Spain in 1681. During the visit, not only the formal speeches, but also all oral contacts between Russian diplomats and Spanish officials were conducted through the medium of Latin.⁶⁶

Spain's position as a world power and the reputation and influence of its literature and language in Europe could explain the regular use of Spanish by most European diplomats posted to Spain in their interactions with Spanish officials before the eighteenth century. The case of Count Francis Eusebius of Pötting, imperial ambassador to the Spanish court (1664–1674), writing his diary in Spanish during his mission is certainly a rare example, but it highlights that, in the seventeenth century, Spanish was by no means an unknown language in Europe.⁶⁷ Certainly, documents were often drafted in a language other than Spanish, and only translated into Spanish in order to be presented to the Spanish side.⁶⁸

However, we find a different language policy in the Habsburg-Spanish Netherlands. The position of the first Secretary for German Affairs, created by Charles V in 1553, was a key role linking Madrid to the Germanies through the Spanish Netherlands. This position was traditionally held by native German speakers proficient in other languages, typically French and Spanish. The correspondence of these secretaries with the princes of the Holy Roman Empire was generally conducted in German, thus adhering to the traditional use of German for imperial affairs. Summaries of this correspondence and translations of the letters received from German princes were prepared either in French or Spanish, depending on who was serving as governor of the Spanish Netherlands.⁶⁹

In the eighteenth century, however, Spanish was less learned and spoken in Europe, while French was on the rise as a pan-European language of diplomacy. The vogue of French was reducing interest in learning other languages. At the same time, the idea of French as a diplomatic *lingua franca* had some difficulty gaining ground in Spain.

For example, in the 1720s–1730s, there is a notable change in the linguistic practices of Russian diplomats at the Spanish court. Prince Ivan Shcherbatov, first counsellor of commerce, then Russian minister plenipotentiary to Spain, wrote to Spanish ministers sometimes in Spanish and at other times in French. However, since Shcherbatov did not know Spanish, his secretary translated his letters from French into Spanish. By contrast, unlike his predecessors, Shcherbatov had a perfect command of French, which became his preferred *lingua franca* during his Spanish mission.⁷⁰

Writing to his superiors in St Petersburg, Shcherbatov stated (not quite correctly) that all foreign diplomats at the Spanish court conducted their correspondence in French.⁷¹ Indeed, in the eighteenth century, many European diplomats in Spain began writing to Spanish officials mostly (and in some cases exclusively) in French.⁷² Moreover, some of those diplomats received letters in French from their fellow diplomats, presumably because the latter wanted to provide the former with documents and arguments that could be presented directly to the Spanish side, considering that French was a universally known language.⁷³

However, French was not a neutral language for the Spanish side, and the rivalry between Spain and France was reflected in a linguistic confrontation in diplomacy. For a long time, all attempts by French officials to use French as a diplomatic *lingua franca* were met with silent resistance by the Spaniards, who tenaciously replied in their own language.⁷⁴ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the French still used Spanish in some situations, but such cases were rare, and French diplomats generally tended to use their own language.⁷⁵ In the 1740s, Marquis d'Argenson, French Foreign Minister, wrote to Luis, Prince of Campoflorido, Spanish ambassador to Paris, only in French.⁷⁶ The Duke of Huéscar, another Spanish ambassador sent to Paris at the end of the 1740s, received numerous letters from French diplomats and various other Frenchmen, all written exclusively in French, to which Huéscar stubbornly responded in Spanish.⁷⁷ This rivalry mirrored that of Spanish–French seventeenth-century treaty policy, in which Spain insisted on bilingual treaties.⁷⁸

Even at the end of the century, some European diplomats continued using Spanish when addressing Spanish officials, thus perpetuating an age-old tradition in a different context, when Spanish was no longer an important diplomatic language in Europe. This led to some linguistic inconsistencies. An interesting example of such language cacophony is the correspondence of the Russian diplomatic representatives to Spain, Nicolas Butzov and Estevan (Stepan) Zinoviev from the 1780s–1790s.⁷⁹ On the one hand, Butzov mostly wrote to Spanish officials in Spanish and only occasionally used French for minor queries. On the other hand, his colleague Zinoviev, who long served as a Russian minister plenipotentiary in Spain, consistently used French.⁸⁰ Such variations could be attributed to the

personal ideas and preferences of the diplomats regarding the appropriate linguistic etiquette to be followed in Spain.

The predominant use of French in the diplomatic correspondence of various European diplomats addressed to Spanish officials contrasted with the frequent use of Spanish in the letters of foreign consuls in Spain, such as those of British consuls in the 1750s. The latter were often tradesmen who had close ties with the country in which they were staying. In some cases, the letters of the British diplomats accompanying those of the consuls of their nation were accordingly also written in Spanish.⁸¹

It should be added that, in the lives of foreign diplomats posted in Spain, language and lifestyle intertwined, shaping their experiences and interactions within the Spanish context. Indeed, foreign diplomats at the Spanish court often surrounded themselves with French-origin domestic servants, as they did in many other European capitals. To give just one example, at the end of the century, the Danish minister to Spain, Christopher Vilhelm Dreyer, had a large number of French-origin domestic servants in his service in Madrid: a head butler, a chef, a kitchen boy, a coachman, a stable boy, and even a potter, but all of them had been in Spain for a long time (between 8 and 18 years).⁸² The secretary of the Danish legation might also have been French judging by his name.⁸³ This characteristic, commonly observed among many diplomats occupying high positions, was not solely an expression of the enthusiasm for everything French that characterised numerous nobles across Europe at the time. It was, in all likelihood, also linked to a strategy aimed at enhancing the prestige of their country's diplomatic representation.

The arrival of American diplomats complicated this linguistic landscape. Indeed, unlike British diplomats, the former commonly used English in their correspondence with Spanish diplomats, thus probably signalling to their interlocutors their claim to the status of a rising power.⁸⁴ Their letters had to be translated into Spanish because at the time, English, unlike French, was an unknown language for most European diplomats.⁸⁵

At first glance, numerous diplomatic sources may suggest that, in the eighteenth century, Spanish officials and diplomats continued using their language when addressing their colleagues from other European countries. In a sense, this conclusion is correct, because, as noted above, in many situations, Spanish officials wrote to European diplomats in Spanish, paying no attention to the language in which they were addressed and insisting on the use of the language of their monarch. However, this apparent clear-cut scenario masks a more nuanced and complex reality.

In many cases, Spanish diplomats adapted their language behaviour to the situation. This was certainly the case during oral interactions. In a letter written (in Italian) on January 17, 1717, from The Hague, Lorenzo, Marquis of Beretti Landi, Spanish ambassador to the United Provinces, told Cardinal Alberoni about his conversation with the British diplomat James Stanhope, in which French served him as a *lingua franca*:

mi pronuncio le precise parole in Francese, M. l'Ambass. j'ai bien des titres, et j'ai bien du penchant a servir le Roy d'Espagne Votre maitre en tout

ce qu'il dependra jamais de moy. Il paroist que lorsque on a fait la guerre dans un Pais, qu'il en reste pour le moins quelque lancune [sic, rancune?]. C'est tout different a mon egard. Au contraire je suis parti charmè du Roy d'Espagne. Il est un brave Prince, il est bon, il est ferme aussi. Je le compare fort souvent avec le Roy d'Anglet.^{re} ; au quel j'ai l'honneur de servir. Ils sont tous deux d'une bonté infinie, et qui leur est naturelle et ou il n'y a aucunne [sic] melange d'artifice ; tous deux veulent penser assez avant que de se resoudre a une chose, mais et [sic] l'un et l'autre sont inébranlable, lorsque leur resolution est faite. Je vous prie de faire scavoir a S.M.^{te} les sentimens que j'ai d'elle, et que pour lui faire voir que je dis tout de bon, on n'a qu'a remarquer, que j'aime dans le Roy d'Espagne les qualitez que je trouve en plusieurs choses [?] dans le Roi d'Angl.^e

[He pronounced the precise words in French: Mr. Ambassador. I have many titles, and I have a strong inclination to serve the King of Spain, your master, in everything that depends on me. It appears that when one has waged war in a country, there may remain at least some bitterness. It is quite different for me. On the contrary, I left charmed by the King of Spain. He is a brave Prince, he is kind, and he is also resolute. I often compare him with the King of England, whom I have the honour to serve. Both of them possess boundless goodness that is natural to them, without any trace of artifice. They both take time to reflect deeply before making decisions, but once their resolution is made, they are unwavering. Please convey to His Majesty the sentiments I hold for him, and to demonstrate that I speak sincerely, one only needs to notice that I admire in the King of Spain the qualities I find in several things concerning the King of England.]⁸⁶

In the 1720s, another Spanish diplomat, Nicolas Antonio Oliver y Fullana, wrote to the States General of the United Provinces in French as well.⁸⁷ In the mid-1720s, Juan Guillermo, Baron of Ripperda, also adapted his linguistic tools to his addressees.⁸⁸ James Francis Fitz-James Stuart, Duke of Liria, Spanish ambassador to Russia in the 1720s, wrote to Russian diplomats in French as well.⁸⁹

However, all these diplomats were not of Spanish origin and had rather cosmopolitan pathways and outlooks. Beretti Landi was an Italian (which explains why he wrote in Italian to Alberoni, also an Italian!) and had notable experience as a diplomat and State Secretary to the Duke of Mantua prior to his service to Philip V. Oliver y Fullana was of Jewish origin, fought in France and in Flanders, and was a member of the Portuguese-Jewish community in Amsterdam, also known for its vibrant francophone life. Ripperda was born in the Netherlands, was deputy to the States General of the United Provinces, and was the Dutch ambassador to the Spanish court before becoming a Spanish diplomat. The Duke of Liria, grandson of King James II of England, was born and raised in France.

Spanish diplomats started resorting to French rather late compared with many other European diplomats, towards the second half of the eighteenth century, and only in their external correspondence. This shift could have been caused not only by the rise of French as the pan-European language of diplomacy in general but

also, as mentioned in the first two sections, by Spanish social elites' progress in their knowledge of French from the second half of the century and by the growing professionalisation of the Spanish diplomatic corps.

However, even in the second half of the century, cases of external correspondence written by Spanish diplomats in French seem to be rarer than, for example, in Russian diplomacy. The command of the French language among Spanish diplomats of the time also seems to have been generally worse. The French correspondence of Pedro Pablo, Count of Aranda (future State Secretary), who spent several years in France as Spanish ambassador to the French court, was generally lively and his language fluent (although certain letters were possibly written by his secretary). However, he could not avoid non-idiomatic expressions, and his language sometimes became unclear, as in the following personal letter written to Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin, French ambassador to the Spanish court, on April 26, 1784:

Je suis sur mon depart en deux ou trois jours, pour arriver à Paris à la fin de may. Toute mon histoire est si neuve, qu'a mon depart de Paris pas memme en songe ne pouvoit point etre prevue.⁹⁰

French was certainly a viable tool of communication for Spanish diplomats when the use of Spanish was deemed to be problematic. In 1731, when the Marquis of Castélar, Spanish ambassador to France, sent his "declaration" to the diplomats of Great Britain, the States General and the French court, the text was in French since it was addressed to diplomats from different countries. Castélar thereby recognised the role of French as a major language of communication in diplomacy.⁹¹ However, this practice was not consistent. In 1747, Melchior de Macanaz, Spanish minister plenipotentiary at the peace conference in Breda, used Spanish to address the ministers of France, Great Britain and the United Provinces who participated in the same conference,⁹² thus again likely signifying that French was not a neutral language for the Spanish side and emphasising the sovereignty of the Spanish crown.

Still, in the second part of the century, this move towards a greater use of French in Spanish diplomatic communication outside Spain seems well engaged. While Spanish diplomats certainly had a sense of pride in their own language and culture, they demonstrated flexibility by accepting to use French in diplomatic communication.

The Russian court furnishes an example of this trend. Starting from the 1760s, all Spanish diplomats posted to Russia used French in their correspondence with Russian ministers and the Empress and transmitted documents mainly in French or, when they were in Spanish, accompanied by a French translation.⁹³ The same trend may be observed at other European courts. The Count of Aranda, Spanish ambassador to Paris (1773–1787), corresponded in French with the French Foreign Minister, Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes,⁹⁴ as he did with some other correspondents such as Prince Charles-Christian of Saxony and the imperial ambassador to France, Florimond-Claude, Count of Mercy-Argenteau.⁹⁵ Similar linguistic practices can be found in the Spanish legation in Vienna (1772) where the Spanish

minister plenipotentiary, Demetrio Jorge, Count of Mahony (of Irish origin and raised in France), wrote in French to the Austrian Chancellor, Wenzel Anton, Prince of Kaunitz.⁹⁶ Another example is Prussia (1784) where the Spanish minister Simon de Las Casas y Aragoni used French when he addressed the Prussian statesmen, Ewald Friedrich, Count von Hertzberg and Karl Wilhelm Finck, Count von Finckenstein.⁹⁷

Interestingly, Italy seems to have avoided (at least partly) this tendency towards the francisation of Spanish foreign correspondence, as Spanish diplomats sometimes addressed letters to Italian officials in Italian.⁹⁸ In turn, the Italians did not refrain from writing to the Spaniards in Italian as well. For example, the Spanish minister plenipotentiary to Dresden, José de Onís López y González, received numerous letters from various Italian officials written in their language.⁹⁹ For a long time Italian remained an important international medium for Spain, partly because of the Spanish possessions in Italy.¹⁰⁰

In summary, although routine diplomatic correspondence was considerably less formal than correspondence between the monarchs, it was still not completely free of political considerations which were never openly expressed; yet, they appear to have influenced the language choices of Spanish diplomats throughout much of this period.

Exchanges with Informers and Spies, Public Diplomacy, and Personal Correspondence

The choice of language in exchanges between Spanish diplomats and informers and spies has not been thoroughly studied;¹⁰¹ yet it is a crucial factor in this type of activity. Unlike routine diplomatic correspondence, which was often exposed to certain members of the diplomatic corps (see below), such contacts were hidden from public view. Consequently, the language used in covert exchanges was naturally practical and devoid of any symbolic or representative significance. Understanding the linguistic dynamics in these hidden interactions can offer valuable insights into the strategies employed in intelligence gathering and espionage at the time.

Spanish diplomats received messages in different languages and often had to translate them. An interesting case is the Spanish intelligence network in Switzerland in the 1710s. In 1715, the aforementioned Marquis of Beretti Landi, Spanish ambassador in Lucerne, corresponded with many informers (more than 20 people), mostly from Switzerland (e.g., Basel, Fribourg, Geneva, Lugano, Menaggio, Solothurn, Tiguri, and Zurich). Three languages were regularly used in these exchanges: French, Italian and German. In general, the language of the letters corresponded to that spoken in the part of Switzerland from which they were sent. There were some cases, however, when the informers opted for French: for example, messages from Lugano were in Italian but sometimes in French, and letters from Solothurn, despite it being a German-speaking town, were only in French. German does not seem to have been welcome at the Spanish Embassy in Switzerland (German letters were often translated into French). Interestingly,

Italian was less welcome than French, even though Beretti Landi was of Italian origin: Schnort, probably a German speaker, addressed messages to Beretti Landi first in Italian and then in French, explaining that he switched to French in order to “conform to your will” (“pour me conformer à sa volonté”), even if his French was not fluent.¹⁰²

During the eighteenth century, handwritten summaries of various pieces of news became an essential tool for collecting information among Spanish as well as other European diplomats. These summaries were regularly distributed, often weekly, and covered a wide range of topics. They focused primarily on political events, including negotiations, mediations, publications on political questions, movements of military troops, and battles. However, they also encompassed court events, such as arrivals of courtiers, updates on the health of royal family members, and official nominations. These reports mirrored the diverse interests of Spanish diplomats. For instance, letters sent to Spanish diplomats in The Hague in 1744 provided detailed accounts of conferences held in Dutch provinces, memorials presented at the States General, and responses issued by foreign ministers. Additionally, the summaries included information obtained from private letters, such as various intriguing rumours.¹⁰³ The handwritten summaries often incorporated non-political news with a wide range of topics, including natural occurrences such as the eruption of Etna or extreme cold weather in Frioul and its impact on the local economy.¹⁰⁴ These summaries were not limited to a single location but frequently contained news from various places. For example, Spanish diplomats stationed in Vienna in 1729 received updates covering events not only in Vienna, which featured most frequently, but also in The Hague, Paris, London, and even the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁵

The identity of the authors of these summaries was rarely known, and the summaries were generally unsigned. In cases where they were signed, the author's name was not their real identity. For instance, the summaries received by the Spanish legation in the Republic of the United Provinces were signed “L’Amico”.¹⁰⁶ Rarely did these authors reveal their names, although it could happen, for example, when a new diplomat replaced the one who had commissioned the correspondence. In this case, the new diplomat might not be aware of the existence of this source of information. Thus, for instance, a certain J. Winant from Liège offered his services to Guillermo Nunez, who replaced the Marquis of Beretti Landi. In an attempt to demonstrate the value of his contributions to Spanish diplomacy, Winant sent copies of some of his letters addressed to the Marquis, wherein he primarily discussed British policy.¹⁰⁷

Providing such summaries was a means of regular income for the authors, particularly because they might have sent such “nouvelles à la main” to more than one addressee. Nicolas Oliver y Fullana, who represented Spain in Holland during the 1740s, paid 50 florins per month for this “correspondencia de noticias”.¹⁰⁸ He emphasised in his letters that he had commissioned such correspondence in strict adherence to the repeated orders of the Secretaries of State.¹⁰⁹

The languages used in these summaries varied. For instance, at the beginning of the century, Carmine Caracciolo, Prince of Santo Buono, the Spanish ambassador to Venice, sent to Madrid numerous letters written in Italian by an unknown

informer, without providing translation.¹¹⁰ However, most of the summaries sent from various parts of Europe were composed in French. The prevalence of French as the language of choice for such correspondence underscores its role as a vital tool for information gathering across Europe during that period and probably the need for local diplomatic personnel to be proficient in French.

Here are some examples. In 1714, the Marquis of Monteleon regularly received summaries on English political issues, including diplomatic affairs. These summaries were consistently written in French, spanning approximately four pages, and were marked “A Londres”. Without translation, the marquis forwarded them to Madrid.¹¹¹ In 1717, the Spanish ambassador to the Republic of the United Provinces, the Marquis of Beretti Landi, received summaries of news in French as well.¹¹² Similarly, in 1726, such letters sent to the Spanish legation in The Hague from both Paris and The Hague were also written in French.¹¹³ Another example is from 1729 when Joseph de Viana y Eguiloz regularly sent such letters written in French from Vienna.¹¹⁴ Remarkably, all these letters were generally written in a highly proficient and fluent French, even though their authors were probably in many cases not native French speakers.¹¹⁵

The significance of French for espionage and information gathering was an unchanging feature in Spanish intelligence networks in Europe during the whole eighteenth century and beyond. In the 1820s, Louis Collignon, alias Baron Kolli,¹¹⁶ “Marshal of the camps and Chief of the General Staff of the Cyprus expedition”, famous for his failed attempt to liberate Ferdinand VII in Valençay, and active in different countries (France, Flanders, England, Spain, etc.), played a key role in organising a vast Spanish intelligence network at the time. While he wrote his letters to the Spanish ambassador to London, the Count of Alcudia, in Spanish, the majority of the other letters written by Kolli and addressed to various foreign and some Spanish correspondents (e.g. chevalier de Los Rios, envoy extraordinary and Spanish minister plenipotentiary to London) were in French. Additionally, other agents such as Malet and de Wuits sent their letters to the Spanish ambassador in London in French, even though they were knowledgeable in Spanish. Moreover, the summaries of conversations between Spanish agents and their informers were also frequently written in French. In other words, French clearly served as a preferred *lingua franca* for the ethnically diverse personnel of Spanish intelligence networks.¹¹⁷

The example of Simon de Las Casas, who represented Spain in Berlin during the 1780s, shows that, by this time, the regular use of French in information gathering was standard practice for a Spanish diplomat. Las Casas frequently used French with the European diplomats stationed in Berlin and with Prussian ministers, and also in various other intelligence activities.¹¹⁸

Indeed, in addition to regular reporting on discussions with the Prussian Cabinet ministers Finckenstein and Hertzberg, as well as other diplomats, which were always conducted in French (see below), Las Casas provided details from letters written or received by fellow diplomats. This was the case with a letter which the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Iakov Ivanovich Bulgakov, wrote to the Russian minister to Berlin, Prince Vladimir Sergeevich Dolgorukii. The

British minister to Berlin, Sir John Stepney, regularly showed to Las Casas his correspondence, for example, the letters he received from Sir Robert Ainslee, the British ambassador to Constantinople, and Sir Robert Murray Keith the younger, the British envoy extraordinary to Vienna.¹¹⁹ This highlights the semi-public nature of diplomatic correspondence during that era when diplomats could share with colleagues from allied countries, often on a regular basis, the letters they wrote or received, allowing those colleagues to read or even copy them.¹²⁰

Las Casas demonstrated an impressive awareness of the circulation of documents and information in Berlin.¹²¹ For instance, on 28 January 1783, he wrote to his minister, the Count of Floridablanca, about a Russian courier passing through the Prussian capital on his way to Paris, leaving letters (“pliegos”) for the Prussian ministers. Las Casas intended to meet these ministers on the same day to obtain further details to provide to his own minister. Similarly, on 1 February 1783, while reporting on a conversation between his colleague Pedro Normande, former Spanish representative to St. Petersburg, and the Prussian minister Hertzberg, Las Casas learned about the arrival of a courier from Vienna, heading to St. Petersburg, and could furnish detailed information about the contents of a letter addressed by the Holy Roman Emperor to Catherine II, carried by this courier.¹²² Las Casas also received information from his private correspondents from Paris, Constantinople, and possibly other locations.

In keeping with the style of Spanish diplomats, Las Casas refrained from providing quotations in the language spoken by the foreign diplomats with whom he interacted, nor did he comment on their use of languages. Although he often led his addressees to believe that he was faithfully reproducing the exact words exchanged during the conversations, it is evident that at times he might not have been a firsthand witness to these conversations. For example, on 14 February 1784, he reported the following to Floridablanca:

Aunque tarde ha sido llamado Dolgorowki por el Sr. Finkenstein para darle la respuesta à su comunicacion, y han sido estas sus palabras: la noticia que V.S. me ha dado ha causado tanto mas gusto al Rey, quanto aumenta la gloria del Reynado de la Emperatriz su amiga y aliada.¹²³

[Although Dolgorukii has been called late by Mr. Finkenstein to give him the response to his communication, these have been his words: the news that you have given me has pleased the King even more, as it enhances the glory of the reign of the Empress, his friend, and ally.]

At the time, Spanish diplomats often resorted to French for semi-official or unofficial matters, as demonstrated by the case of the Count of Aranda. In 1785, he faced the issue of a critical book about Spain, published by the Marquis de Langle in French in St. Malo, and later republished in Neuchâtel and Seville.¹²⁴ To address this matter, Aranda corresponded with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vergennes, requesting the book’s distribution to be halted in France. In response, Vergennes ordered the seizure of all copies of the book in French bookshops. Throughout this episode, all of Aranda’s letters to various correspondents,

including Jacques Necker and the French Minister of Justice (“Garde des Sceaux”), were written in French.¹²⁵ In fact, Aranda personally composed a vehement rebuttal of the book in French, but he cautiously sought the assistance of native French speakers to refine his style.¹²⁶

Aranda’s personal correspondence with the French aristocracy, both the letters he received and those he addressed to French aristocrats, was predominantly in French.¹²⁷ These included invitations and short notes exchanged daily with French aristocrats.¹²⁸ While I found occasional personal letters in Spanish from French noblemen to Spanish diplomats, such instances remain rare. For example, Louis Des Balbes de Berton de Crillon, Duke of Mahón, sometimes addressed letters to the Count of Floridablanca in French during the 1780s, but other letters from the same Crillon were composed in Spanish. However, by this time Crillon was a subject of the King of Spain as he had passed into the service of Charles III. By contrast, all Floridablanca’s personal correspondents from Spain wrote to him only in Spanish during the 1780s and 1790s.¹²⁹

The growing significance of French as the primary European diplomatic language and a crucial tool for fostering sociability among diplomats is underscored by the personal archives of certain Spanish diplomats. Nevertheless, these personal documents also shed light on the persistent multilingual nature of a diplomat’s real life.

One striking example comes from the archives of the aforementioned Simon de Las Casas, who represented Spain in various European capitals such as Berlin, Naples, Venice, and London during the 1780s and 1790s. Among the documents, numerous letters addressed to Las Casas are in French, originating not only from France but also from non-francophone regions such as Florence, Maastricht, Mendrisio, Milan, Munich, Saint Petersburg, Stuttgart, Turin, Vienna, and Zurich, among others. Additionally, some letters are in Italian, hailing from Italian cities and Vienna, and some are in German (from Las Casas’s mistress), while many others are in Spanish, received from Spain (including the Spanish Secretary of State, the Count of Floridablanca) as well as from Venice and Padua.

Furthermore, the archives contain bills written in French, German, and Spanish; periodicals in German, French, Italian, and Spanish; and other publications in French and English; a Russian vocabulary, etc. This diverse collection of documents signals the multilingualism prevalent among diplomats. However, amidst the various languages, French emerges as the prominent medium, not only due to the substantial number of letters in this language but also due to the remarkable diversity of locations from which French letters were addressed to Las Casas, including the different national origins of the authors of the letters.¹³⁰

Conclusion

During the first half of the eighteenth century and even beyond, the use of the Spanish language remained crucial for Spanish diplomats in various situations and contexts. These include not only their everyday communication with their fellow diplomats but also their communication with diplomats from other countries.

I argue that the continuous use of Spanish in communication with diplomats from other countries, who, unlike their predecessors from the seventeenth century, often did not have a sufficient command of Spanish and opted for French, is a consequence of two phenomena.

The first is a seemingly low proficiency in foreign languages among many Spanish diplomats of the first half of the eighteenth century, which can be inferred from the survey of language learning in Spain in general and the analysis of the life and career pathways of Spanish foreign affairs personnel in this period. Spanish diplomats of foreign origin, rather numerous within the highest stratum of the Spanish Foreign Department in the first half of the century, were certainly more proficient in foreign languages and often used French in their interactions with foreign diplomats.

The second factor is the long tradition of using Spanish in diplomacy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This use was both a cultural heritage and a manifestation of Spain's ambitions as a world power. It can be seen as an expression of concern about the status of Spanish and Spain in Europe, and as an example of external linguistic policy aimed at maintaining the international role of Spanish. However, the sources do not seem to contain any instructions or regulations concerning the use of languages, probably because the Spanish diplomatic corps had long remained sufficiently uniform and coherent in terms of its culture and linguistic competence that there was no need for specific regulation in this area.

Compared to this official field, language use in some other areas was not political but rather pragmatic. French found acceptance among Spanish diplomats, particularly in contexts where the symbolic representation of power was not at stake and when this language facilitated communication with representatives from different countries simultaneously. Moreover, for Spanish diplomats, French emerged as the primary tool for intelligence gathering and network building and a valuable asset when addressing French or international audiences in order to improve their country's image.

The situation of French in Spanish diplomacy seems to mirror that in Spanish noble society. Unlike in Russia, where French evolved into a prestigious sociolect, thus contributing to its rapid spread in Russian diplomacy, in Spain French was not a sociolect but rather a *lingua franca*. This underlines the diversity of forms of social and cultural Francophonie in Europe and the different effects it could have on communication within the field of diplomacy.

Notes

- 1 Scott, "Diplomatic Culture in Old Regime Europe", 67.
- 2 Scott, "Diplomatic Culture in Old Regime Europe", 67.
- 3 Although there is a considerable number of studies and some publications of the correspondence of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Spanish diplomats, there are hardly any mentions of the languages used by them in their exchanges. Here are just some examples of the works reviewed for this study: Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia española*; Fernandez-Santos & Colomer (eds.), *Ambassadors in Golden-Age Madrid*;

- Ozanam, *Les diplomates espagnols du XVIIIe siècle*; Pérez Bueno, "Correspondencia diplomática del Conde de Mahony". Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, is a rare exception insofar as the author devoted chapter III to the role of language in diplomatic relations between Spain and the Hanseatic League in the seventeenth century, mostly in ceremonial context. On translation in Spanish diplomacy, see note 6.
- 4 The folios of the documents held in Spanish archives are hardly ever numbered. In some cases, where possible and needed, I indicated the date of the document.
 - 5 On the role of language in audiences at the Spanish court at the beginning of the seventeenth century, see Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 148–154. On language practices in peace negotiations conducted by Spanish diplomats, see the article by Guido Braun in this volume and Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, 156–177.
 - 6 On translation in Spanish foreign affairs, see particularly the works by Ingrid Cáceres Würsig, for example: "Breve historia de la secretaría de interpretación de lenguas"; *Historia de la traducción*; "The jeunes de langues in the eighteenth century"; and Weller, *Ungleiche Partner*, ch. III *passim*.
 - 7 My translation from Spanish. Antonio de Nebrija, *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (1492), 5. On the topos of empire in relation to the evolution of languages see: Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 20, 22, 23.
 - 8 Martínez, "Language, Nation and Empire in Early Modern Iberia", 44–45.
 - 9 On the political history of Spanish, its relation to other Iberian languages and its expansion in Latin America see del Valle (ed.), *A Political History of Spanish. The Making of a Language*.
 - 10 Castro Flores & Hidalgo Lehuédé, "Las políticas de la lengua imperial".
 - 11 Lescasse, "Autonomie de la langue et mythification du passé national".
 - 12 On the rise of vernaculars and the interest in them in early modern Europe see Burke, *Languages and communities in Early Modern Europe*.
 - 13 On German as a foreign language in Europe see: Glück, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache in Europa vom Mittelalter bis zur Barockzeit*. On learning French in early modern Europe, see: Riemens, *Esquisse historique de l'enseignement du français en Hollande*; Schröder, "Französischunterricht in Berlin im 18. Jahrhundert"; Frijhoff, "Amitié, utilité, conquête ?"; and many publications in the journal *Documents HFLES*. On the role of Huguenots in particular, see for example: Böhm, *Sprachenwechsel*.
 - 14 Elliott, "Prologue: Nationalism and Transnationalism in the Court of Spain", 22.
 - 15 González Cuerva, "Saben la lengua de España, mas saben el lenguaje de palacio".
 - 16 The decline of interest in Spanish at the court was triggered by the dynastic crisis following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Tercero Casado, "Esto me suena a tudesco", 114–115, 118.
 - 17 Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 59, 139–145; Tercero Casado, "Esto me suena a tudesco", 108.
 - 18 Some manuals were published by authors working in the field of foreign affairs, like César Oudin, "secrétaire-interprète du roi", author of *Grammaire et observations de la langue espagnole* (1597) and *Grammaire espagnole expliquée en françois* (1606) and other works often republished in France. In the third edition of this last book, Oudin noted that there was not even one copy left of the two previous editions: Oudin, *Grammaire espagnole mise et expliquée en françois* (1612), dedication, unnumbered page. On Oudin and other French and Spanish authors who published Spanish manuals in France in the seventeenth century, see: Maux-Piovan, *Les Débuts de la didactique de l'espagnol en France*; Zuili, "L'enseignement du castillan en France au XVIIe siècle", 96–97, 100, 103–105, etc.
 - 19 Lépinette, *El francés y el español en contraste y en contacto (siglos XV–XVII)*, 63–94; Suárez Gómez, *La enseñanza del francés en España hasta 1850*, 48–74.
 - 20 Such as the travel accounts by Barthélémy Joly (1603–1604), by Madame d'Aulnoy (1691), etc. Lapeza, *Historia de la lengua española*, 196–197.

- 21 Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 63, 73. Manuals of other European languages than Spanish for Spanish-speaking students were published more often outside Spain than in Spain itself. Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 1145–148.
- 22 For example, in the *Grand Memorial* of the Count-duke of Olivares (1632, 1635) or the manual *Del maestro del principe* by Jerónimo Fernández de Otero (1633). Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 162–165. The first and for some time only institution for the nobility where French and Italian were introduced (as optional disciplines) was the Royal Seminary of Nobles (*Real Seminario de Nobles*) founded in 1725, Fernandez Fraile, & Suso López, *La enseñanza del francés en España*, 70. The idea that the arrival of a French prince on the Spanish throne in 1700 had a vitalising effect on the knowledge of French among the courtiers is supported by rare indirect testimonies only. Fernandez Fraile & Suso López, *La enseñanza del francés en España*, 66–67. F. Brunot remarked shrewdly: “Left free, [the Spanish aristocracy] remained faithful to its customs, and the ignorance of French was one of its traditions”, my translation from French: Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française, des origines à 1900*, vol. 8, 47.
- 23 Tercero Casado, “*Esto me suena a tudesco*”, 119–120.
- 24 Tercero Casado, “*Esto me suena a tudesco*”, 118.
- 25 Indeed, the available data on the publication of French-Spanish dictionaries, grammars and manuals denote a considerable increase in popularity of this kind of book production. Fernandez Fraile & Suso López, *La enseñanza del francés en España*, 67–68.
- 26 Offord, Rjéoutski, & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*.
- 27 For example, French (and, sometimes, English) was part of the curriculum of the Royal Military School (Real Escuela Militar, 1774) in Avila, the Nautical Academy (Academia de Náutica, 1785) in Málaga, the Royal Asturian Nautical and Mineralogical Institute (Real Instituto Asturiano de Náutica y Mineralogía, 1795) in Gijón, etc.
- 28 Fernandez Fraile & Suso López, *La enseñanza del francés en España*, 60–64, 69–72.
- 29 For more details see: Ozanam, *Les diplomates espagnols du XVIIIe siècle*, 16–17.
- 30 Cordero Torres, *El Consejo de Estado*, 47.
- 31 Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 81–82; Elliott, “Prologue: Nationalism and Transnationalism in the Court of Spain”, 22; On Pötting, see below.
- 32 When, in 1574, Spanish Foreign Affairs tried to find a suitable candidate for the post of Spanish ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire with at least some knowledge of German, they could not find anyone. Martínez Tortajada, *Contacto de lenguas y pueblos*, 75.
- 33 Tercero Casado, “*Esto me suena a tudesco*”, 120–121, 123.
- 34 TNA, SP 94/31, fol. 25r, 99r, 103r, 105r, etc.; SP 94/63, fol. 250r–252v, 256r–256v, 273r–274r, etc. Ronquillo was born into the family of a diplomat and spent his early years with his family in Italy where he learned French, Italian, and English. Salado Santos, “Pedro Ronquillo Briceño”.
- 35 *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 68.
- 36 Sánchez Marcos, “Los oficiales generales de Felipe V”, 243–244, quoted after Ozanam, “Les étrangers dans la haute administration espagnole au XVIIIe siècle”.
- 37 Ozanam, *Les Diplomates espagnols du XVIIIe siècle*, 29–30.
- 38 Cf. Droste, *Im Dienst Der Krone*, 86; on linguistic consequences of the presence of foreigners in Swedish diplomacy in the eighteenth century, see the article by Sophie Holm in the present volume; on the Russian case, see the article by Maria A. Petrova in this volume.
- 39 On this question, see Shikulo, “Ucheniki inostrannykh iazykov”.
- 40 Count Floridablanca, Spanish Foreign Minister, complained in 1792 that, apart from French, Italian and some German, no one knew other languages in Spanish foreign affairs, while the Spaniards sometimes had to deal with documents in Swedish, Dutch,

- Danish, Russian, Turkish, Arabic and Hebrew. Cáceres Würsig, "The *jeunes de langues* in the Eighteenth Century", 132.
- 41 Cáceres Würsig, "The *jeunes de langues* in the Eighteenth Century", 135.
 - 42 Ozanam, *Les Diplomates espagnols du XVIII^e siècle*, 35–38.
 - 43 Ozanam, *Les Diplomates espagnols du XVIII^e siècle*, 38.
 - 44 Ozanam, *Les Diplomates espagnols du XVIII^e siècle*, 12, 38.
 - 45 On the case of Russia see: Offord, Rjéoutski, & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*.
 - 46 One example is the Count of Aranda, who represented Spain in France in the 1770s–1780s, AHN, Estado, 2826 (1773–1786).
 - 47 Some foreigners in the English diplomatic service wrote mostly in French. TNA, SP 94/75 (Letter dated 23 March 1701, etc., François Schonenbergh, English envoy extraordinary to Madrid, to the State Secretary Vernon; 1 April 1701, to the King of England).
 - 48 See for example: RA, Anglica 178 (Ch. Leijoncrona, 1689–1710). On the languages of internal Swedish diplomatic correspondence in the eighteenth century see the article by Sophie Holm in this volume.
 - 49 Schmoller, *Acta Borussica*, Bd. 6/2. S. 6–7, I am grateful to Tatjana Trautmann for this information. On this linguistic turn, see her article in this volume.
 - 50 See the correspondence of Joseph Maria Nikolaus Ignaz Karl, Baron Neuhaus, AVPRI, f. 6, op. 1, d. 16.
 - 51 On the comparison of Swedish and Russian internal diplomatic correspondences see: Holm & Rjéoutski, "I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me for Writing in a Foreign Language".
 - 52 Rjéoutski, Offord, & Argent, "French as a Diplomatic and Official Language in Imperial Russia", 453–454.
 - 53 Just some examples, whose number can be easily expanded: AHN, Estado, 1433 (1732); 4063/1 (1744); 4646 (1789).
 - 54 Early in the century, some documents were sent to Madrid in German as well, for example during the peace congress of Utrecht, in 1712–1714; however, all these documents are accompanied by a French translation. AHN, Estado, 3379 (1712–1714). To give just a couple of examples, the Spanish minister in Switzerland in 1740, Miguel de Caparoso, sent documents in French and in Italian to his minister, Marqués de Villarias. AHN, Estado, 4645 (1740). In the same years, numerous attachments in French were also sent to Madrid from the Spanish legation in the Ottoman Empire; many were sent in Spanish and in Italian, the latter usually without translation. AHN, Estado, 3380 (1738–1741), 3411 (1736–1742). Many documents in French were attached to the correspondence (in Spanish) addressed by the Count of Aranda to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jerónimo Grimaldi, in 1774. Such documents included a letter written by Prince Louis de Rohan to the Duke of Aiguillon, a letter on the events in Poland and the retreat of the Russian troops, the printed bulletins on the illness of the king of France sent to various European courts, an excerpt from a letter by the French minister to St. Petersburg, Durand de Distroff, on Pugachev, the king's decrees, the funeral orations by Bossuet, parliamentary records, etc. AHN, Estado, 4068 (1773–1775).
 - 55 Some very rare exceptions I have come across in the Archives all concern Spanish diplomats of foreign origin. Such diplomats include, for example, the Duke of Liria (who occasionally wrote to Philippe V in French, though generally his internal correspondence is in Spanish), Tobias del Burgo (who often wrote to the Marquis of Grimaldo in French as well), and the Marquis of Beretti Landi (who sometimes wrote to Cardinal Giulio Alberoni in Italian; see below). AGS, Estado, leg. 6610, docs 91 and 94; Estado, leg. 6660 (January 1, 1715, etc.).
 - 56 AHN, Estado, 1433 (1732).
 - 57 He was of Italian origin but born and raised in Spain.

- 58 AHN, Estado, 4265/2 (1753–1779).
- 59 One of the rare cases concerns the correspondence of the State Secretary of Italian origin, Cardinal Alberoni, who exchanged with some Spanish diplomats in Italian (see hereafter). This correspondence was a kind of unofficial communication parallel to the official one which was in Spanish, but in 1719 the decision was taken to conduct all his correspondence in Spanish in order to stress the official character of his position. Sallés Vilaseca, *Giulio Alberoni y la dirección de la política exterior española*, 193, n. 331; 203–204, 211–212.
- 60 See: Holm & Rjéoutski, ““I Ask Your Excellency Most Humbly to Pardon Me for Writing in a Foreign Language””.
- 61 AHN, Estado, L.727 (1595–1702).
- 62 AHN, Estado, L.732 (1630–1702). In the 1620s, the Spanish Secretary of State Andrés de Losada y Prada wrote sometimes to English diplomats in Spanish and, at other times, in French, and the latter did the same. TNA, SP 94/31, fol. 214r (Losada to Aston, in Spanish, 7/17 September 1624), 224r (Losada to Aston, in French, no date).
- 63 The diplomats representing the Great Duke of Tuscany, Modena, and the Duke of Parma. AHN, Estado, 1596 (1691–1699); L.734 (1693–1704). However, some Italian princes (e.g. Dukes of Mantua and Parma) also used Italian in their correspondence with the Marquis of Villagarcía, Spanish ambassador to Venice: AHN, Estado, L.209 (1677–1685).
- 64 AHN, Estado, 1596 (1691–1699). At least Leopold did it on a regular basis, AHN, Estado, L.713 (1651–1659).
- 65 AHN, Estado, L.721 (1671–1677).
- 66 “porque ellos solo hablaban lengua Ruthena”. AHN, Estado 4257.
- 67 Nieto Nuño (ed.), *Diario del Conde de Pötting*.
- 68 TNA, SP 94/75, William Aglionby (19 March 1692) explains that the draft was written in French and then translated into Spanish; both versions were sent to London.
- 69 Weis, “Translating Diplomacy”. This position existed until 1729.
- 70 NLR, Mss, Erm. 123–1, fol. 213r, 219r–219v.
- 71 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 96, fol. 122r–122v.
- 72 Examples include the correspondence of British diplomats in the 1750s and 1780s, AHN, Estado, 4294 (1753–1755), 4063/2 (1744, etc.) and Danish representatives in the 1780s and 1790s. AHN, Estado, 3854 (1708–1800). Several Danish diplomats posted in Spain in the 1780s–1790s addressed letters to Spanish officials exclusively in French. I found only one letter written in 1793 by a Danish diplomatic representative to Spain (Dreyer) in Spanish.
- 73 Examples can be found in the correspondence of British diplomats at the Spanish court, AHN, Estado, 4295 (1763–1796), letters from 1 July 1754, 28 August 1755, etc. Interestingly, British diplomats would start using English in their letters to the Spaniards in the nineteenth century, probably under the influence of the linguistic practice of American diplomacy (on the language practice of American diplomats, see the article by Jonathan Singerton and Ellen R. Welch in this volume). This was to present a new challenge for the Spanish side, as they now had to systematically translate the letters in English into Spanish. AHN, Estado, 8503/1–2 (1846–1847).
- 74 ANF, Marine B7, 228, fol. 43r–44r, 50r–51r, 68r–68v, 70r–71r, etc. Such letters were often, probably even systematically, translated in France into French.
- 75 A couple of examples from the beginning of the eighteenth century: in 1705, Pontchartrain and Chamillar wrote letters to the Marquis of Grimaldo and the Marquis of Mejorada in French. AGS, Estado, leg. 4301 (1705); the same year, the French ambassador to Spain, Michel Amelot, wrote to the Marquis of Grimaldo in French. However, we also find a couple of examples when Amelot chose Spanish while addressing Grimaldo or Ibáñez. The choice of language does not seem to depend on the subject matter of the letter. AGS, Estado, leg. 4302 (1705–1710).

- 76 AHN, Estado, 4045 (1743–1746).
- 77 At least in the documents from 1746–1749 that I could see. Some French noblemen wrote to the Duke of Huéscar in Spanish (e.g. the Marquis of La Roche Aymont), but such cases were exceptional. Sometimes the same person wrote to Huéscar in French and in Spanish (Adrien Maurice Duke of Noailles); it seems that in this case Spanish was chosen for non-official matters. Some non-French correspondents wrote to Huéscar in French as well. AHN, Estado, 4044 (1746–1749). This tendency did not change when the French Revolution broke out: in the 1790s, the Consul General of the French Republic systematically wrote to Spanish officials in French. AHN, H2449, A=Política Exterior (1768–1850).
- 78 Schmidt-Rösler, “Die ‘Sprachen des Friedens’”, 256.
- 79 I am using the names we find in their diplomatic correspondence.
- 80 AHN, Estado 4649 (1782–1798). Notably, some of Zinoviev’s letters in French were accompanied by their Spanish translations in the archival records, indicating the necessity of translating French even towards the end of the eighteenth century. In the 1790s, Zinoviev systematically communicated documents in French to the Spanish Foreign Minister, the Count of Floridablanca. These documents included copies of reports by the Russian Vice-Chancellor, Count Ivan Andreevich Osterman, as well as communications from British and Prussian envoys to Russia, among others. Despite this insistence on using French, Spanish officials always responded in Spanish to Zinoviev’s letters.
- 81 See several examples of letters in Spanish written by British consuls in Spain (Alicante, Barcelona, and Cartagena), and letters written by English tradesmen in Alicante and Cadiz, AHN, Estado, 4294 (1753–1755), 4295 (1763–1796). However, at the end of the century, the Russian minister Zinoviev transmitted to Spanish ministers a letter of the Russian consul in Cadiz written in French, AHN, Estado, 4649 (1782–1798).
- 82 AHN, Estado, 3854 (1708–1800), Dinamarca 1793, Expedientes.
- 83 AHN, Estado, 3854 (1708–1800), Dinamarca 1793, Expedientes.
- 84 However, there were certainly issues with a command of French as well; see the article by Jonathan Singerton and Ellen R. Welch in this volume.
- 85 AHN, H2392 (1812).
- 86 AGS, Estado, leg. 6184 (1717).
- 87 AGS, Estado, leg. 6204 (1726).
- 88 Ripperda was writing in French to various addressees, AGS, Estado, leg. 6398 (1725–1726).
- 89 AGS, Estado, leg. 6611 (1728), no. 70.
- 90 AHN, Estado, 2826 (1773–1786). To be fair, it should be added that diplomats from other countries, even countries like Denmark, whose diplomacy was known for its long francophone tradition, did not always have a very high level of proficiency in French, cf. this excerpt from a letter of the Danish minister to Spain, Dreyer (28 October 1786): “Je ne saurois avoir la [sic] moindre Doute, que vous ne trouveriez monsieur, cette ma Demande aussi juste que nécessaire : afin de faire cesser au plustôt le mauvais effet à resulter au commerce et a la Navigation des Danois, et le susdit article ne soit d’abord verifié ou contredit”. Cf. also his other letter containing language errors, September 4, 1795, AHN, Estado, 3854 (1786, 1795), Expedientes.
- 91 AHN, Estado, 4044 (1746–1749).
- 92 AGS, Estado, leg. 4474 (1747).
- 93 They include Marquis Almodóvar, Vicomte Herrería, Rio, and Normande. Almodóvar was certainly aware that translating documents from Spanish was still a challenge for Russian diplomacy. However, he used Spanish during the audiences at the Russian court, but his Spanish speeches were translated either into French or into Latin: AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 519 (1762); 522 (1763); 527 (1763); 533 (1770); 544 (1779).

- 94 AHN, Estado, 4063/2 (1744).
- 95 AHN, Estado, 1826 (1773–1786).
- 96 AHN, Estado, 3622 (1770–1783). On his diplomatic correspondence, see Pérez Bueno, “Correspondencia diplomática del Conde de Mahony”.
- 97 AHN, Estado, 3380 (1740–1741, 1738–1741), Expediente 8.
- 98 E.g. a letter from Vicomte of Herreria to Giuseppe Beccadelli di Bologna e Gravina, Marquis de la Sambuca, State Secretary of the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. 7 March 1784. AHN, Estado, 3854 (1708–1800), Dinamarca 1793, Expedientes 8.
- 99 AHN, Estado, 3826 (1760–1796).
- 100 It is not surprising to find in the archives of the Spanish State Secretariat various treaties and memoirs in Italian, mostly without translation, for example: AHN, Estado 3411 (1736–1742). Mahony sent to Madrid periodicals in Italian and copies of letters in Italian received from Constantinople, without translating them either, AHN, Estado, 3622 (1770–1783). Italian was also an important medium in the interactions of Spain with the Ottoman Empire throughout the eighteenth century. AGS, Estado, 3380 (1738–1741, 1782–1784); 3411 (1736–1742).
- 101 References to language practices in the milieu of Spanish spies are very rare and rather general in the studies of the Spanish intelligence service, see e.g.: Taracha, *Spies and diplomats*, 340.
- 102 AHN, Estado, 4652 (1715).
- 103 AGS, Estado, leg. 6239 (1744).
- 104 AGS, Estado, leg. 6445 (1729).
- 105 AGS, Estado, leg. 6446 (1729).
- 106 AGS, Estado, leg. 6184 (1717).
- 107 AGS, Estado, leg. 6210 (1726).
- 108 AGS, Estado, leg. 6239 (1744).
- 109 “en virtud de reiterados ordenes de los S.^{res} Marques de Grimaldo, la Paz y don Joseph Patino”, 1 October 1744, AGS, Estado, leg. 6239.
- 110 AGS, Estado, leg. 5668 (1705–1711).
- 111 AGS, Estado, leg. 6827 (1714–1715), 6829 (1714–1715), 6831 (1715).
- 112 AGS, Estado, leg. 6184 (1717).
- 113 AGS, Estado, leg. 6204 (1726).
- 114 AGS, Estado, leg. 6445 (1729).
- 115 One can rarely find language errors which are revealing, for example (I highlighted them in bold): “Le congrès va **se** recommencer à Soisson au premier du mois de May, on fait à Londres **de** 5 nouvelles instructions pour Mssrs Stanhope et Walpole Ministres de S.M. Britt”. AGS, Estado, leg. 6446 (1729).
- 116 On Kolli see: Grasilier, *Aventuriers politiques sous le Consulat et l'Empire*. He is the author of: *Memoirs of the Baron de Kolli, relative to his secret mission in 1810*.
- 117 AHN, Estado, 2824 (1825–1828).
- 118 As can be inferred from the documents attached to his reports written, as usual, in Spanish. AGS, Estado, leg. 6602 (1783), 6603 (1784).
- 119 1 and 7 February respectively, 1784, AGS, Estado, leg. 6603 (1784).
- 120 That is the reason for a letter in French sent in 1717 by Alberoni to Beretti Landi in order to be shown to Charles Whitworth, British envoy extraordinary to The Hague. Sallés Vilaseca, *Giulio Alberoni y la dirección de la política exterior española*, 404–405.
- 121 This practice appears to be standard for an eighteenth-century diplomat, as illustrated, for instance, by Sophie Holm’s research: Holm, “In a city flooded with pamphlets”. However, it was certainly not a universal norm. A case in point is that of Prince Ivan Shcherbatov, a Russian diplomat stationed in Spain during the 1720s–1730s, whose experience highlights the fact that a lack of familiarity with the language used at the royal court and by the country’s ministers could severely curtail a foreign diplomat’s ability to gather information in Spain. His official diplomatic correspondence demon-

- strates the limited nature of his information sources when compared to those used by Las Casas: NLR, Mss, Erm., 123–1, 123–2, 123–4.
- 122 AGS, Estado, leg. 6602 (1783).
- 123 February 14, 1784, AGS, Estado, leg. 6602 (1783).
- 124 Floriot, *Voyage de Figaro en Espagne* (1785); *Voyage en Espagne par M. le Marquis de Langle* (1785).
- 125 AHN, Estado, 2839 (1779–1792).
- 126 AHN, Estado, 2842 (1774–1776), Apartado 3.
- 127 AHN, Estado, 4068 (1773–1775).
- 128 See for example such exchanges between Aranda and Madame Valentinois (possibly Marie-Christine-Chrétienne de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon, Countess de Valentinois) in: AHN, Estado, 4068 (1773–1775), here 20 and 25 October 1773.
- 129 AHN, Estado, 2816 (1785–1792).
- 130 AHN, Estado, 4995–5000 (1785–1795).
- 131 The references for the Spanish archives correspond to boxes usually containing hundreds of documents, and not to individual documents. The folios of the documents are generally not numbered. Due to limited space, I do not indicate the titles of the boxes.

Unpublished Sources

AGS—*Archivo general de Simancas (General Archives in Simancas), Spain*¹³¹

- AGS, Estado, leg. 3380 (1738–1741, 1782–1784).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 3411 (1736–1742).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 4301 (1705).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 4302 (1705–1710).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 4474 (1747).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 5668 (1705–1711).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6184 (1717).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6204 (1726).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6210 (1726).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6239 (1744).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6398 (1725–1726).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6445 (1729).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6446 (1729).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6602 (1783).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6603 (1784).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6610 (1727).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6611 (1728).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6660 (1721).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6827 (1714–1715).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6829 (1714–1715).
- AGS, Estado, leg. 6831 (1715).

AHN—*Archivo Histórico Nacional (National Historical Archives), Madrid, Spain*

- AHN, Estado, 1433 (1732).
- AHN, Estado, 1596 (1691–1699).
- AHN, Estado, 1826 (1773–1786).
- AHN, Estado, 2816 (1785–1792).
- AHN, Estado, 2824 (1825–1828).
- AHN, Estado, 2826 (1773–1786).
- AHN, Estado, 2839 (1779–1792).
- AHN, Estado, 2842 (1774–1776).
- AHN, Estado, 3379 (1712–1714).

AHN, Estado, 3380 (1740–1741, 1738–1741).
 AHN, Estado, 3411 (1736–1742).
 AHN, Estado, 3622 (1770–1783).
 AHN, Estado, 3826 (1760–1796).
 AHN, Estado, 3854 (1708–1800).
 AHN, Estado, 4044 (1746–1749).
 AHN, Estado, 4045 (1743–1746).
 AHN, Estado, 4063/1–2 (1744).
 AHN, Estado, 4068 (1773–1775).
 AHN, Estado, 4257 (1641–1645).
 AHN, Estado, 4265/2 (1753–1779).
 AHN, Estado, 4294 (1753–1755).
 AHN, Estado, 4295 (1763–1796).
 AHN, Estado, 4645 (1740).
 AHN, Estado, 4646 (1789).
 AHN, Estado, 4649 (1782–1798).
 AHN, Estado, 4652 (1715).
 AHN, Estado, 4995–5000 (1785–1795).
 AHN, Estado, 8503/1–2 (1846–1847).
 AHN, Estado, L.209 (1677–1685).
 AHN, Estado, L.713 (1651–1659).
 AHN, Estado, L.721 (1671–1677).
 AHN, Estado, L.727 (1595–1702).
 AHN, Estado, L.732 (1630–1702).
 AHN, Estado, L.734 (1693–1704).
 AHN, H2392 (1812).
 AHN, H2449, A=Política Exterior (1768–1850).

ANF—*Archives nationales de France (National Archives of France), Paris, France*
 ANF, Marine B7, 228.

AVPRI—*Arkhiv vnesheinei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperi (Archives of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire), Moscow, Russia*
 AVPRI, f. 6, op. 1, d. 16 (1743).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 96 (1726–1731).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 519 (1762).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 522 (1763).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 527 (1763).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 533 (1770).
 AVPRI, f. 58, op. 1, d. 544 (1779).

NLR—*Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, Otdel rukopisei (National Library of Russia, Manuscript Department, St Petersburg)*
 NLR, Mss, Erm., 123–1 (1727–1732).
 NLR, Mss, Erm., 123–2 (1725–1726).
 NLR, Mss, Erm., 123–4 (1730).

RA—*Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives, Stockholm)*
 RA, Anglica 178 (1689–1710).

TNA—*The National Archives, Kew Gardens, UK*
 TNA, SP 94/31 (1624).
 TNA, SP 94/63 (1674–1676).
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8 Language and Career

Karl and Ivan Simolins in the Diplomatic Service of the Russian Empire*

Maria A. Petrova

In the eighteenth century, the State College of Foreign Affairs in Russia employed numerous foreign individuals as diplomatic representatives of the Russian Empire abroad, as well as embassy staff. Before the late 1750s, foreign missions typically involved a secretary of the embassy, a translator and an actuary. Subsequently, the role of a counsellor of the embassy was introduced, with this role becoming the second-ranking position in diplomatic missions. In addition, clerks, *junkers* and students of the College, as well as “gentlemen of the embassy” (*chevaliers d’ambassade*), stayed at the missions to learn both foreign languages and work with correspondence. Specifically, the students, who usually came from underprivileged backgrounds, were trained for secretarial work and, if they were successful, for translation. In contrast, the gentlemen of the embassy learnt the art of diplomacy and the intricacies of behaviour and communication in high society with the aim of becoming the head of the mission in the future.¹

The Russian monarchs recruited foreign subjects for diplomatic service in order to try to compensate for the lack of their own personnel and the absence of professional educational institutions for training diplomats. The new subjects of the Russian Empire were natives of the Baltic provinces acquired by Russia as a result of the Northern War of 1700–1721, including first- and second-generation Swedes, Baltic Germans, Livlanders and Estonians. These subjects had foreign roots, and for them, Russian was not, or had not yet become, their mother tongue. The main focus of this article is on the Simolin brothers—the sons of a Swedish pastor who achieved significant success in the diplomatic service, in part, as will be shown in this work, due to their extensive language skills.

Diplomats of the Russian Empire: National and Social Origin

A comprehensive, collective portrait of the Russian diplomatic corps of the eighteenth century has yet to be created. In Soviet historiography, the personnel policy of the College of Foreign Affairs and the principles governing the selection of

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diplomats have been studied in the context of the formation of the bureaucracy and the ruling elite of the Russian Empire. In this context, Sergei Mikhailovich Troitskii determined the social composition, origin, number and level of education of the employees of the main state institutions, including the College of Foreign Affairs.² Matters of personnel policy have been explored in studies on Russia's relations with individual countries and in the presentation of a collective portrait of diplomats who served in particular European capitals,³ as well as in general works on the history of the Russian foreign office.⁴ In particular, in her PhD dissertation, Anna Joukovskaïa analysed the internal documentation of the College of Foreign Affairs. Joukovskaïa's research aimed to identify the mechanisms of personnel decision-making and factors influencing promotions, with a focus on patronage and informal ties at the Russian court. However, this analysis largely centred on the employees of the College in Saint Petersburg and Moscow rather than diplomatic personnel abroad.⁵

Maksim Iurievich Anisimov traced the overall approach to appointments abroad during the reign of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (1741–1761). He observed that the leadership of the College placed significant emphasis on training their own personnel, despite the existence of foreign individuals within the Russian diplomatic service.⁶ Furthermore, the criteria used by Empress Catherine II to choose diplomats in the first half of her reign (until the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774) have been studied by the author of the present article. Of the 17 appointments to the 15 diplomatic posts that existed during this period, at least nine were made based on the personal qualities (primarily “zeal for service” and conscientious fulfilment of duties) and abilities of the applicants. Usually, these abilities remain obscured in documents, referred to only as “special art” or “knowledge of business”, with the skill of fluency in foreign languages frequently omitted. In other cases, appointments were made based on proximity to the court and the empress or due to support from the ministerial leadership.⁷

The establishment of a diplomatic mission system in Europe began in Russia towards the end of the seventeenth century. When preparing personnel for these new foreign institutions, Tsar Peter I initially drew on the expertise of Moscow diplomats from the Ambassadorial Chancery, who were primarily from the provincial nobility (Prokofii Bogdanovich Voznitsyn, Emelian Ignatievich Ukraintsev, Piotr Vasilievich Postnikov). However, Tsar Peter I subsequently favoured appointing aristocrats to key positions. Of the 23 Russian diplomats who headed missions between 1700 and 1725, 18 belonged to old noble families—Princes Golitsyns, Princes Dolgorukovs, Princes Khilkovs, Matveevs (Counts since 1715) and Bestuzhev-Riumins (Counts since 1742)⁸. Before 1710, many appointees lacked relevant experience, even though they may have travelled abroad and possessed varying levels of foreign language proficiency, particularly in Latin, German and Italian. After 1710, those who rose to the rank of head of mission were significantly more educated, having served under the first Petrine diplomats.⁹ However, due to a shortage of qualified personnel, Peter I began to employ foreigners of unknown origin as agents and, subsequently, as ministers with diplomatic rank. Most of these individuals were natives of the states and regions that were part of the Holy Roman

Empire¹⁰ and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹¹ After the establishment of a new foreign policy department in Russia called the College of Foreign Affairs in 1718, all diplomats were appointed to serve there, which contrasts with the previous period when heads of temporary missions were typically not affiliated with the Ambassadorial Chancery.¹²

After the annexation of Swedish territories in the Baltics by Russia following the Great Northern War of 1700–1721, individuals of noble origin who spoke foreign languages, including Swedes and Baltic Germans residing in Livonia and Estland, could partake in diplomatic activities. Nevertheless, this involvement did not begin immediately, likely because Peter I and his successors may have doubted their loyalty. The only exception was Johann Ludwig Lüberas von Pott (1687–1752), a Swede who entered Russian service as a military engineer in 1700. He later served as minister plenipotentiary in Stockholm from 1744 to 1745, but he was recalled due to the inadequate performance of his duties.¹³ When Anna Ioannovna, Dowager Duchess of Courland and Semigallia, ascended the Russian throne in 1730, Courlanders entered the Russian diplomatic service.¹⁴

In the middle and the second half of the eighteenth century, approximately half of the diplomatic positions were occupied by Russian-born diplomats, including individuals from titled nobility such as old princely families¹⁵ and noble families, who were bestowed with the titles of count or baron from the Romanovs or the Holy Roman Emperors Charles VI, Francis I Stephen and Joseph II.¹⁶ Another group of titled nobility involved those whose grandfathers or fathers originated from the lower classes and were ennobled and given titles based on family relations or proximity to monarchs.¹⁷ A large group of diplomats were non-titled nobles from old Russian¹⁸ and Ukrainian¹⁹ families. A notable Russian-born diplomat of non-noble origin was the son of a priest, Aleksandr Stakhievich Stakhiev (1724–1794), who was envoy to Constantinople in 1775–1781.

In the late 1750s, individuals from the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire started to be appointed to high diplomatic positions. Among the first to have been appointed were Karl Gustav and Johann Matthias Simolins, both of Swedish origin, whose cases are examined in this article. During the reign of Empress Catherine II (1762–1796), such appointees were usually Baltic Germans and less frequently Swedes, and their number in the Russian diplomatic service continued to grow.²⁰ Additionally, most of them previously held positions as translators, secretaries or embassy counsellors in Russian missions abroad. Despite discussions during the reign of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (1741–1761) on the necessity of national personnel,²¹ subjects of German states²² and the Republic of Venice²³ were commonly chosen by Russian monarchs in the second half of the eighteenth century as their diplomatic representatives. Furthermore, most of these individuals were swiftly promoted to high diplomatic posts. However, some began their careers as translators or secretaries of Russian missions, including members of families from urban circles such as Heinrich and Friedrich Gross, Karl von Bühler and Anton Sebastian Struve.

The language practices of the multinational community of Russian diplomats have only recently become a subject of study. This topic is associated with the

general focus of modern historiography on the issue of the use of foreign languages during the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century, when French gradually replaced Latin as the primary language for international communication and became the language of choice of the court and for secular communication. The works of Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski and Gesine Argent explore the interaction between the French and Russian languages and Francophonie in Russia. As early as the first third of the eighteenth century, Russian diplomats used French not only when communicating with foreign colleagues abroad but also in domestic correspondence amongst themselves.²⁴ According to my calculations, approximately half of Catherine II's diplomats came from Russian nobility. For this nobility, French represented a formulaic language of a mature culture that had developed a comprehensive code of conduct. Indeed, French became for nobility a marker of social identity and social superiority over representatives of other estates.²⁵

However, in contrast to the linguistic practices of Russian-born diplomats, those of foreigners and of first- and second-generation natives of the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire, for whom Russian was not their mother tongue, have not yet been sufficiently studied.

Career Paths and Language Competences of the Simolin Brothers

The sons of the Swedish vicar Matthias Simolin (1684–1753), Karl Gustav and Johann Matthias, were born in Reval. Biographical dictionaries indicate that they were born in 1715 and 1720, respectively. In autobiographies written in 1754, Karl Gustav wrote that he was 35 years old (i.e. born in 1718 or 1719), and Johann Matthias reported that he was born in 1721.²⁶ Little information is available regarding the education of the brothers. Karl Gustav mentioned his self-funded study of foreign languages abroad in his youth. He also completed legal studies in Halle, while Johann Matthias attended university in Jena in 1739 and in Åbo (present-day Turku), Sweden, in 1743. Notably, studying in Germany facilitated the brothers' mastery of the German language.²⁷

On 27 March²⁸ 1740, Karl Gustav started working for the College of Foreign Affairs under the patronage of his relative, Karl von Brevern (1704–1744), who was the secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers of Empress Anna Ioannovna. Subsequently, Brevern became the Privy Councillor and Conference Minister of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna.²⁹ At first, Simolin's rank was a '*Buchhalter*', with a salary of 100 rubles per year. Subsequently, on 26 January 1741, Simolin was promoted to the rank of translator, with an annual salary of 200 rubles. On 2 February 1742, Karl Gustav presented Elizabeth Petrovna with a petition in Russian requesting a rise in his salary. The College produced a specific 'extract' about Simolin for the empress, indicating that he had been hired for his knowledge of the Latin, French and Swedish languages. This document also mentioned that he was promoted within a year "due to his good diligence and hard work in making translations".³⁰ The report was presented to Elizabeth Petrovna on 15 February; however, the documents do not mention the decision that was taken.³¹

No later than April 1741, Carl Gustav was tasked with handling correspondence in the German language. Indeed, one rescript and two clerical notes addressed to Johann Dietrich Heinson (1701–1770), the Russian resident in Hamburg, were penned in Simolin's own hand.³² Since Simolin's handwriting was not calligraphic, it is more commonly found not on finished documents but on drafts of German-language rescripts sent to Russian diplomats who came from German states. He wrote some rescripts directly in German and some translated from Russian into German as early as 1742.³³ In addition, Simolin's handwriting can be found on the copies made of intercepted reports in German and French sent by foreign diplomats in Saint Petersburg to their courts.³⁴

Simolin was clearly a capable individual who could work in different fields. Following the sudden death of K. von Brevern on 3 January 1744, Vice-Chancellor Count Aleksei Petrovich Bestuzhev-Riumin (1693–1766) suggested to Elizabeth Petrovna that she promote Brevern's relative Karl Gustav and appoint him as the secretary of the College of Foreign Affairs with a salary of 500 rubles per year. Bestuzhev-Riumin noted specifically that Simolin had proficiency in multiple languages. However, the empress had already made a promise to the newly appointed minister plenipotentiary to Sweden, J.L. Lüberas, to send Karl Gustav along with him to Stockholm. The reason for this decision was that "he [was] greatly needed for the improvement of clerical affairs and [was] skilled in the art of the Swedish language, as well as in other languages". The late Brevern had also requested that Elizabeth send Simolin to Stockholm. Bestuzhev-Riumin attempted to object by highlighting the indispensability of his polyglot subordinate in the College. On 18 January 1744, the vice-chancellor informed the empress that Simolin was proficient in several languages, including Swedish, and could translate fluently from Russian into German. Bestuzhev-Riumin also noted that finding a comparably skilled individual would pose a challenge. Simolin himself expressed a desire to remain in Saint Petersburg with a promotion to the position of secretary and an increase in his salary. In addition, both the translator Fedor Ivanovich Chernev from Berlin and the secretary Wilhelm Lüdwig Schriever were supposed to be sent to Lüberas.³⁵

Elizabeth expressed her disapproval regarding these proposals, stating that a competent individual could be recruited for the College at any time. The vice-chancellor, who had previously objected to the appointment of the Swede Lüberas as the Russian representative in Stockholm, was forced to concede. Simolin's departure may also have disappointed Baron Josef Maria von Neuhaus, the minister plenipotentiary of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VII, in Saint Petersburg. Upon discovering that it was customary at the Russian court to draft all official letters to foreign monarchs in Russian and to provide translations in German or Latin, Neuhaus sought to find someone capable of verifying the precision of the translations of the letters sent to Charles VII and, additionally, of translating different documents from Russian and "other northern languages", when necessary. By February 1744, such an individual had been found, but soon General Lüberas took him along as a translator to Sweden. This outcome makes me think that Neuhaus had intended to recruit Simolin as his own assistant.³⁶

The journey to Stockholm lasted almost one year, as the empress granted Lüberas permission to travel through Berlin, Hamburg and Copenhagen instead of Finland. Upon arrival in Sweden on 28 December 1744, Simolin, who received a meagre sum of 200 rubles for the journey and incurred significant debts, immediately petitioned Elizabeth Petrovna in Russian and requested his return to the College, a promotion in his rank and an increase in his salary. Although he signed Karl Gustav in his 1742 petition, from 1744 onwards, he signed as “Karl Matveev Simolin” in the Russian manner.³⁷

The petition was submitted to the empress on 18 January 1745. As she was not satisfied with Lüberas’ prolonged voyage, A.P. Bestuzhev-Riumin, by this time already chancellor, persuaded her to bring Simolin back to Saint Petersburg. In Simolin’s place, he proposed to send Shriever, the secretary of the embassy in Berlin, to Stockholm, as had been suggested one year earlier.³⁸ Through Bestuzhev’s efforts, Karl Matveevich was promoted to the position of secretary in the College by virtue of the empress’s personal decree on 17 September 1745.³⁹ Subsequently, on 26 October 1749, he was appointed as a Court Councillor, earning an annual salary of 800 rubles.⁴⁰ Simolin had a close relationship with the Chancellor; according to the Prussian envoy to Saint Petersburg, Axel von Mardefeld, in February 1747, he resided in Bestuzhev’s home as one of his three secretaries.⁴¹ However, it seems that the service did not satisfy Simolin, primarily in financial terms, as the salary was meagre, and he had to work day and night.⁴² Consequently, he petitioned Elizabeth Petrovna twice, in 1752 and 1755, to transfer him as a councillor to the provincial board of Reval, but his requests went unanswered.⁴³

In 1758, there was a significant change in Simolin’s life. On 26 March, Elizabeth promoted him to the rank of collegiate councillor and appointed him to represent her in Courland, replacing Ernst Johann von Butlar.⁴⁴ Due to the ongoing Seven Years War, the post in Mittau was of considerable importance to Russia. Plans were being discussed in the empress’s inner circle to exchange East Prussia, which had been conquered by Russian troops in early 1758, for Courland. The choice of Simolin for this position, thus, testifies to the confidence of Elizabeth Petrovna and the leadership of the College of Foreign Affairs in his loyalty. The appointment took place one month after the arrest of Chancellor Bestuzhev-Riumin on 14 February 1758. Therefore, it can be assumed that his secretary and confidant was deliberately removed from Saint Petersburg. In 1763, Karl Gustav Simolin rose through the ranks to become an actual state councillor in Mittau, a position he held until his death on 16 August 1777.

Johann Matthias, the younger brother of Karl Gustav, joined the College of Foreign Affairs in August 1743 as a junker with a yearly salary of 150 rubles. On 21 January 1744, he was appointed to the same rank in Copenhagen and sent to the Courlander Baron Johann Albrecht von Korff, the minister plenipotentiary of Russia in Denmark, with an additional 150 rubles. In 1746, Johann Matthias Simolin and Korff were relocated to Stockholm. On 31 January 1748, Simolin was promoted to secretary of the embassy,⁴⁵ the second highest post in the mission, and became responsible for compiling and editing reports. However, due to the dissatisfaction of King Gustav III and Riksdag with Korff’s involvement in Swedish

internal affairs, he was transferred back to Copenhagen. Simolin stayed in Sweden but continued to perform intelligence duties. The newly appointed minister plenipotentiary, Nikita Ivanovich Panin, required him primarily to communicate with local agents, as he was fluent in Swedish, but his involvement in correspondence in Russian was limited. Subsequently, in the autumn of 1752, Simolin requested a transfer to a different post since he found himself with nothing to do in Stockholm between the triennial Riksdag meetings. This request was granted, and Simolin returned to Copenhagen to Korff.⁴⁶ As M. Anisimov highlighted, the real reason for the recall was Sweden's dissatisfaction with Simolin and the possibility of having him declared a *persona non grata*.⁴⁷

In the spring of 1757, the position of secretary of the embassy in Vienna under Count Hermann Karl von Keyserlingk, the Russian ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Courland origin, became vacant. Vienna, as the residence of the Holy Roman Emperor, was likely the most prestigious destination in the hierarchy of diplomatic posts, and the College of Foreign Affairs aimed to guarantee that the head of mission and the embassy secretary corresponded using the same language. Simolin's choice for this position indicates that he was the best among the embassy secretaries who were proficient in German at that time.⁴⁸

In February 1758, Keyserlingk suggested his subordinate for the first high diplomatic post in his life, that of the Russian resident at the Permanent Reichstag of the Holy Roman Empire (Imperial Diet) in Regensburg. Candidates for this post had to possess diplomatic art and knowledge of imperial constitutions and laws.⁴⁹ The candidate also needed to be proficient in Latin, which was one of the official languages of imperial paperwork. Empress Elizabeth followed the advice of the experienced diplomat and, on 19 March 1758, appointed Simolin as resident to Regensburg,⁵⁰ where he served with brief interruptions until 1772. Simolin participated in the negotiation of a ceasefire treaty with the Ottoman Empire in Giurgiu on 19 May 1772 as a diplomatic representative of Field Marshal Petr Aleksandrovich Rumiantsev. Following the successful completion of this mission, he was granted the rank of state councillor and appointed as envoy to Denmark, a post he had long sought.

In August 1774, Catherine II decided to recall the envoy Ivan Andreevich Osterman (1725–1811) from Stockholm and to appoint him as a member of the College of Foreign Affairs. He was then appointed vice-chancellor six months later. Simolin was offered the vacant post in Sweden, but he tried to refuse as he expected to spend his remaining service years at the allied Danish court in Copenhagen where he was stationed. Johann Matthias complained about the unsuitable climate of Stockholm and his poor health. Furthermore, the diplomat was of the opinion that the Swedes still remembered his espionage operations in the second half of the 1740s, which could have harmed Russian interests.⁵¹ Despite objections, in early 1775, Simolin was appointed to Stockholm, possibly due to his knowledge of the Swedish language and his expertise in “northern” affairs. He was later appointed to London in 1779 and to Paris in 1784. Each time, his role was to enhance the missions' work. It is important to note that fluency in French was necessary to serve at the leading European courts.

In 1792, Johann Matthias, who was already a privy councillor (a rank equal to a lieutenant general in the army), became a diplomatic agent of the anti-French coalition forces and began to reside primarily in Vienna. He was appointed ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Madrid in the year 1798 but passed away before he could carry out his duties there. He made a brilliant career for a son of a modest Swedish vicar, rising from the low rank of “junker of the College” to some of the highest positions in Russian diplomacy.⁵²

Language Practices of the Simolin Brothers

Karl Gustav Simolin spent a considerable period of his life in Saint Petersburg, where he oversaw German-language correspondence in the College of Foreign Affairs for over 10 years. The surviving official and personal correspondence from his diplomatic service in Europe reveals a significant shift in his language approach during his service in Courland. On the eve of his departure for Mittau (currently Jelgava, Latvia), 7 July 1758, Simolin received a rescript from the College. The document instructed him to direct all his reports to the highest authority in Russian, since translating them from German would lead to “unnecessary difficulties”.⁵³ This instruction highlights that the departmental management aimed to spare the interpreters unnecessary work, given their confidence in Simolin’s linguistic proficiency, and he himself voiced no opposition.

To assist the diplomat with his correspondence, on 7 July 1758, the junker of the College, Nikolai Evsiukov, was sent to Mittau with the rank of secretary of the embassy.⁵⁴ Evsiukov was responsible for drafting the majority of Simolin’s reports until 1768. In 1770, Ivan Ivanovich Kelderman replaced Evsiukov as the secretary of the embassy. Kelderman was most likely a native of the Ostsee provinces and had equal proficiency in Russian and German. The way in which the diplomats worked on the reports is unknown; specifically, it is unclear whether Karl Matveevich dictated the text or gave general direction while the secretaries worked independently.

Out of the 45 reports signed by Simolin in 1758, only one (dated 15/26 September) was written in German, though not in his own hand. This report concerned a disagreement regarding the land ownership in Courland of the Swedish Count Ture Gabriel Bielke. The decision to use the German language in this case was likely related to the report’s contents and the fact that it referred to various German-language documents attached to it.⁵⁵

Only one autographic report, dated 27 December 1758, survived out of all of Simolin’s letters written in Russian, and its content was secret. In the report, the diplomat conveyed his thoughts on the balance of power in Courland and ways to enhance the Russian influence within the Duchy. The spelling and style of the text demonstrate the author’s fluency in Russian. Therefore, it can be concluded that Karl Simolin and the Russian-born staff of the Mittau mission had comparable linguistic skills. It is noteworthy that several language corrections were made in pencil by someone at the College of Foreign Affairs. However, the number of corrections made for a document spanning 10 pages was negligible. The mistakes

made by Simolin were either lapses of the pen or could be attributed to the peculiarities of his pronunciation.⁵⁶

Unlike his colleagues in the second half of the century, who frequently corresponded with the leadership of the College of Foreign Affairs (Mikhail Illarionovich Vorontsov, Nikita Ivanovich Panin, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn, Ivan Andreevich Osterman and Aleksandr Andreevich Bezborodko) in French, Simolin opted to communicate with them only in Russian. Simolin seldom wrote for himself, preferring to use the services of the Russian-born mission staff. I have found only one handwritten letter by Karl Matveevich in French, which was dated 11 (22) April 1775. In the letter, he expressed his regret to Vice-Chancellor A.M. Golitsyn on his retirement and congratulated him on receiving the court rank of chamberlain.⁵⁷ It is possible that, due to the limited exposure to French in Russia, Simolin's proficiency in French was not as advanced as his Russian; additionally, in Courland, he was not required to use the French language. On the other hand, it could be assumed that, in the case of this letter, he was writing not as a subordinate to a superior but as a private individual to another private individual, albeit one of higher standing, and French served here as the language of social interaction.

The primary languages used in the correspondence of Johann Matthias Simolin were German and French. He adhered to the unwritten policy of the College of Foreign Affairs, which stated that reports to the highest authority should be presented in the native language of the diplomat. Accordingly, between 1758–1772, Simolin sent German-language official reports to the Russian monarchs from Regensburg. Being a native of the Ostsee provinces, he excelled in German and received rescripts in the same language. Simolin communicated with the leadership of the College and the Russian diplomats abroad in French, irrespective of their origin. This choice of language allowed for the levelling of differences in the social status of correspondents, as the majority of his correspondents belonged to the titled nobility. Simolin wrote all the dispatches and letters from Regensburg and a substantial portion of the official reports in his own hand, although from 1762 the secretary of the embassy, Anton Sebastian Struve from Holstein, and from 1767 the actuary (later translator), Wilhelm Becker from Livonia, were also part of the mission.

Although Johann Matthias served exclusively abroad from 1744 and visited Saint Petersburg only occasionally (in 1762, 1771 and 1776), he had some knowledge of the Russian language from the beginning of his career. His handwritten petition in Russian dated 23 October 1746, with a request to grant him the rank of secretary of the embassy and signed "Iogan (Юган) Simolin", has been preserved.⁵⁸ The petition appears to have been drafted by a proficient native speaker, given the absence of any grammatical errors. During his time in Regensburg in the mid-1760s, Johann Matthias was involved in sending European colonists to Russia on behalf of Catherine the Great. He received regular instructions in Russian from the Chancellery of Guardianship of Foreigners (*Kantseliariia opekunstva inostrannykh*), which was responsible for their reception. However, as Simolin himself admitted, these instructions were not as clear (*pas d'une si grande clarté*) as the clerical notes in Russian periodically sent to him from the College of Foreign

Affairs. Simolin requested the Chancellery documents to be translated for him at the Russian mission in Vienna, which resulted in additional expenses and delay. Consequently, in 1765, he insisted on the inclusion of German or French translations with the instructions from the Chancellery of Guardianship.⁵⁹ The Vice-Chancellor, A.M. Golitsyn, who had promised to manage the translation problem, was astonished by this admission, since the empress and the leadership of the College of Foreign Affairs were confident that Simolin had sufficient knowledge of Russian to understand the contents of the documents sent.⁶⁰

During his later service, Simolin ceased writing reports to Catherine II in German and instead began using French,⁶¹ even though Livlander Johann Mestmacher was in Copenhagen and Johann Rickman (born in Petersburg, the son of a Saxon surgeon) in Stockholm, and these individuals were capable of producing reports in German if the head of the mission so desired. It is notable that there were very few official reports sent by Simolin to the empress from Stockholm, and the discussion of current affairs seems to have been made primarily in his correspondence with Vice-Chancellor Ivan Osterman. It is possible that this shift could be attributed to Osterman's expertise as a former envoy in Sweden. The use of the German language in rescripts addressed to Simolin on behalf of the empress had also ceased by this time. It is interesting to note that these rescripts were now directly sent to him in Russian, without any translation, regardless of the complexity of the case!⁶²

Simolin's personal archive includes several letters from Field Marshal Piotr Aleksandrovich Rumiantsev in Russian outlining the negotiations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1772. Simolin did not seem to have any problems understanding these letters; however, he consistently responded to them in French.⁶³ In 1780–1781, the Russian envoy to The Hague, Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn, wrote several letters to Simolin; most of them were in Russian. Two letters contained a shift from French to Russian, although the reasons for this were not explained and cannot be inferred from the context.⁶⁴ However, it is crucial to note that Russian diplomats were aware that it was acceptable to correspond with Simolin in Russian without any negative implications. There are also a few Russian-language reports to Empress Catherine II from Stockholm and London signed by Johann Matthias, and these reports were compiled with the assistance of Russian-born mission staff. Generally, the content of these reports required a response from the College of Foreign Affairs, such as its Public Expedition, which was responsible for financial disbursements, or from other institutions such as the Senate or the Chamber Office (*Kamer-Kontora*).⁶⁵

It is challenging to account for Simolin's impressive career progression without considering his language skills, despite the other significant factors involved (patronage from the College leadership and extensive knowledge of European politics). Indeed, his potential competitors were often drawn from the highest nobility, and such individuals were typically preferred for key diplomatic posts. In this context, Johann Matthias's language skills may have provided him with an advantage.⁶⁶ To a certain extent, Simolin's proficiency in Russian blurred the difference between the Russian-born aristocrats and the poor native of the Ostsee region and reinforced his bond with the Russian Empire. The diplomat himself

began to highlight this bond when he was in Regensburg. Prior to the early 1760s, he signed his German reports and letters in French first as “Johann Simolin” and then as “Jean Simolin”. In 1764, he adopted the name Iwan Simolin, only to revert back to Johann in 1766. The name’s form did not depend on the language in which he wrote. While serving in London and Paris, where French became the primary language of his correspondence, the French name “Jean” was prevalent. In official documents in the Russian language, he signed as Ivan. His Russian correspondents addressed him as Ivan Matveevich in their Russian letters.

Simolin’s extended service in Regensburg played a significant role in shaping his identity and self-representation. Holding a post at the Imperial Diet was burdensome for many foreign diplomats due to the impossibility of engaging in politics or negotiating foreign policy issues. Indeed, the Diet was not a monarch’s court but rather an assembly of representatives from the Imperial Estates. Endless conflicts over ceremonial issues with representatives of German princes irritated foreign diplomats, who were limited to the role of observers and, thus, spent significant time on leave.

However, Simolin was able to vividly display his intelligence, insight, organisational skills and enthusiasm for service to the empress and the leadership of the College of Foreign Affairs. He oversaw the transportation of foreign colonists to Russia; acquired works of art for Catherine II and her associates (including Vice-Chancellor Golitsyn); brought talented artists to Russia; searched for agents in Rome capable of providing the Russian court with valuable intelligence concerning the politics of the Holy See, the activities of the Jesuit order and Polish affairs; checked that no material tarnishing the honour of the Russian court appeared in print; and provided reviews of the domestic and foreign policies of German princes and the significant conflicts among Imperial Estates. Supporting him in this activity, the diplomat was equipped with proficiency in French and German, as well as the ability to read Italian to some extent. Moreover, Simolin likely possessed some degree of familiarity with English. Being later the envoy to London, he urged his employees to learn this language.⁶⁷

Simolin’s career goal in Regensburg was the position of envoy to the allied Denmark, as this was a highly valued position in the unofficial hierarchy of diplomatic posts. Indeed, Simolin began his career there and still had connections. Nevertheless, Catherine II did not replace her representative in Copenhagen, Mikhail Mikhailovich Filosofov (1732–1811), who fulfilled his duties correctly and maintained good relations with the Danish court and ministry. In a letter to Vice-Chancellor Golitsyn dated 20 (31) May 1770, Simolin expressed the assumption that a certain obstacle to successful advancement in the service could be his origin. However, he stressed that, as a subject of the Russian Empire, he was in no way inferior to the Russian-born diplomats and that he would not be overlooked at court:

Quoique je n’aie pas l’avantage d’être né Russe, je suis cependant, né sujet de l’Empire et pour ce qui est de zèle, d’attachement et de fidélité pour la Patrie, je crois ne le céder à qui que ce soit, par conséquent j’espère qu’on ne

regardera pas un Gentilhomme Livonien comme etranger; D'ailleurs l'équité de S.M. Imp[éria]le et de Ses Ministres eclarés me rassure entierement, qu'on n'admettra pas à ce titre quelque difference dans la distribution des emplois, d'autant plus qu'il y a mille exemples, que même la qualité d'étranger, n'a pas été un obstacle à participer aux graces de la Cour.⁶⁸

As previously discussed, Simolin's merits did not go unnoticed. His "patriotic zeal" in serving Russia was later acknowledged by Catherine II.⁶⁹ Therefore, his strategy of positioning himself as a loyal subject of the Russian Empire proficient in the Russian language ultimately proved successful.

Conclusion

The examination of language practices in the correspondence of Russian diplomats is highly significant, since information about the language competencies of such individuals is rarely found in the documents of the College of Foreign Affairs, in its leadership correspondence or in official rescripts concerning diplomatic appointments. Identifying these practices raises questions regarding the role that foreign language proficiency played in advancing an individual's career, alongside other factors, including social background, patronage, familiarity with politics and international law, negotiation skills, personal charisma and the ability to conduct oneself in public.

The case of the Simolin brothers proves enlightening in multiple ways, not only because they both achieved significant success in their respective careers. Indeed, having been raised in the same family and having received similar educations, they achieved different sets of language competencies from those languages initially available to them to learn (Swedish, German, Russian, French, Latin and possibly other languages). Karl Gustav was responsible for correspondence in German at the College of Foreign Affairs. However, during his diplomatic posting in Courland after 1758, he predominantly used Russian, which he had mastered during his extended stay in Saint Petersburg. If, following the exile of Chancellor Bestuzhev-Riumin, Simolin was intentionally removed from the College, then Mittau may have been an appropriate place for him to serve. Indeed, while staying in this city, which did not have a diplomatic corps, he did not need to communicate in French, a language he had not had the opportunity to practise. The ability to speak German and Russian fluently was sufficient for fulfilling his duties. It is uncertain whether Karl Gustav had the desire and opportunity to change his place of service, but it is evident that his career growth was significantly limited, despite him being known as a polyglot. The reasons for this remain unclear.

Johann Matthias, who spent most of his life abroad and adhered to the cultural trends of the time, consistently used French rather than German in his correspondence. French was the language of the international diplomatic community and cultural noble milieu, which he was able to enter due in part to his high linguistic competency. While his proficiency in speaking and writing Russian certainly trailed behind that of his elder brother, by the mid-1770s, he had achieved a perfect

understanding of the language. This proficiency did not escape the attention of the College of Foreign Affairs, which was thereby spared the task of translating any documents for him, including rescripts. The breadth of his language abilities ensured that he was qualified to work in any European location.

An examination of the language use of the Simolin brothers reveals that while French expanded in the internal communication of the College of Foreign Affairs during the second half of the eighteenth century, the significance of other national languages (namely German and Russian) remained considerable. Concurrently, the new subjects of the Russian Empire felt compelled to learn the Russian language to establish themselves professionally, regardless of how their careers unfolded later. However, this was not the case for everyone. For instance, Baron Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, whose diplomatic career began in 1766 as an envoy extraordinary to Spain, either had a very poor or no proficiency in Russian. In contrast, Count Karl Magnus von der Osten-Sacken, serving as an envoy to Denmark from 1775 to 1784, had some knowledge of the Russian language due to his long-standing position at the College of Foreign Affairs since 1761 and his elevation to the rank of Master of Ceremonies to the heir to the throne, Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich, in 1773. Both diplomats composed their reports in French, a language that subsequently entered into the internal correspondence of the Russian foreign policy department and became the primary language of communication with Catherine the Great for foreign-origin diplomats in Russian service.⁷⁰ In the course of further research, I aim to determine whether Baltic Germans serving in diplomatic roles studied the Russian language and to what extent they used it in their professional activities.

Notes

- 1 On the nobles of the embassy, see: Khavanova, “Gde osnovanie ne polozheno, tam i stroit’sia nel’zia”.
- 2 See: Troitskii, *Russkii absoliutizm i dvorianstvo XVIII veka*, 155–294.
- 3 See for example: Aleksandrenko, *Russkie diplomaticheskie agenty v Londone v XVIII v.*; Volosyuk (ed.), *Rossiiskie diplomaty v Ispanii*; Petrova, “Diplomatische Vertreter Russlands im Heiligen Römischen Reich”; Petrova, “Diplomaty inostrannogo proiskhozhdeniia na sluzhbe Rossiiskoi imperii”.
- 4 Turilova, *Istoriia vneshnepoliticheskogo vedomstva Rossii*; Stegnii, “Kollegiia inostrannykh del v period pravlennia Ekateriny II”.
- 5 Joukovskaia, *Le service diplomatique russe au XVIIIe siècle*.
- 6 Anisimov, “Rossiiskaia diplomaticheskaia shkola vo vremena Elizavety Petrovny”.
- 7 Petrova, “Interes Nash vstreboval uchinit’ peremenu mest”.
- 8 Altbauer, “The Diplomats of Peter the Great”.
- 9 On the study of French and other foreign languages in the nobility under Peter the Great see: Rjéoutski, “Die französische Sprache in der Adelserziehung”.
- 10 For example, Johann Friedrich (Andrei Ivanovich) Ostermann (1686–1747) from Westphalia; Johann Friedrich Böttiger (1659–1739) from Saxony; Johann Christoph von Urbich (1653–1715) from Thuringia; Baron Albrecht von der Lieth (1659–1718) from Brandenburg; and Hans Christoph von Schleinitz (1661–1744) from Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel.
- 11 Pavel Ivanovich Iaguzhinskii (1683–1736) and Ludwik Kazimierz Łączyński (1680–1752).

- 12 Bohlen, "Changes in Russian Diplomacy under Peter the Great"; Altbauer, "The Diplomats of Peter the Great".
- 13 In 1752, Chancellor Aleksei Petrovich Bestuzhev-Riumin initiated proceedings into Lüberas' activities in Stockholm, but no evidence was presented to prove his guilt: *AKV*, vol. 33, 430–446.
- 14 Count Karl Gustav von Löwenwolde (after 1686–1735); Baron Casimir Christoph von Brackel (1686–1741); Baron, after 1742 Count Hermann Karl von Keyserlingk (1697–1764); Count Johann Albrecht von Korff (1697–1766); Count Ernst Johann von Butlar / Butler (1690–1771).
- 15 Princes Aleksandr Mikhailovich (1723–1807), Dmitrii Mikhailovich (1721–1793), and Dmitrii Alekseevich (1734–1803) Golitsyns; Princes Sergei Petrovich (1696–1761) and Vladimir Sergeevich (1723–1803) Dolgorukovs; Prince Ivan Sergeevich Bariatskii (1740–1812); Princes Andrei Mikhailovich (1735–1776) and Aleksandr Mikhailovich (1752–1809) Belosel'skii-Belozerskii; Prince Aleksandr Borisovich Kurakin (1752–1818); Princes Piotr Ivanovich (1718–1778) and Nikolai Vasil'evich (1734–1801) Repnins; Prince Mikhail Nikitich Volkonskii (1713–1788); Prince Nikolai Borisovich Iusupov (1750–1831).
- 16 Count Aleksandr Gavrilovich Golovkin (1688–1760); Count Aleksei Petrovich Bestuzhev-Riumin (1693–1766); Count Nikita Ivanovich Panin (1718–1783); Count Aleksei Semenovich Musin-Pushkin (1730–1817); Counts Semen Romanovich (1744–1832) and Aleksandr Romanovich (1741–1805) Vorontsovs; Counts Nikolai Petrovich (1754–1826) and Sergei Petrovich (1755–1838) Rumiantsevs.
- 17 Count Pavel Martynovich Skavronskii (1757–1793, his grandfather was the brother of Catherine I) and Count Andrei Kirillovich Razumovskii (1752–1836) from Ukraine.
- 18 Iakov Ivanovich Bulgakov (1743–1809); Stepan Alekseevich Kolychev (1746–1805); Pavel Artem'evich Levashev (1727/1728–1820); Aleksandr Semenovich Mordvinov (1733–?); Arkadii Ivanovich Morkov (1747–1827); Aleksei Vasil'evich Naryshkin (1742–1800); Aleksei Mikhailovich Obreskov (1718–1787); Sergei Vasil'evich Saltykov (1722–1784); and Mikhail Mikhailovich Filosofov (1732–1811).
- 19 Akim Grigor'evich (1742—after 1809) and Vasilii Grigor'evich (1737–1815) Lizakevichs; Viktor Pavlovich Kochubei (1768–1834).
- 20 Reinhold Johann (Ivan Mikhailovich) (1733–1792) and Hans Wilhelm von Rehbinder (1728–1779); Baron Johann (Ivan Ivanovich) von Mestmacher (1732–1805); Baron (then Count) Otto Magnus (1736–1800) and Gustav Ernst (Gustav Ottonovich) (1766–1850) von Stackelberg; Count Karl Magnus (Karl Ivanovich) von der Osten-Sacken (1733–1808); Burckhard Alexius Constantin (Aleksei Ivanovich) von Krüdener (1746–1802); Swedes Magnus Maximilian (Maksim Maksimovich, 1748–1822) and Frans David (David Maksimovich, 1769–1831) Alopaeus; Count Jacob Johann (Iakov Ivanovich) von Sievers (1731–1808); and Count Otto Heinrich (Osip Andreevich) Igelström (1737–1823).
- 21 See letters of M.P. Bestuzhev-Riumin to M.I. Vorontsov: *AKV*, vol. 2, 263, 279–280.
- 22 Heinrich Gottfried (Genrikh Ivanovich, 1714–1765) and Friedrich (Fedor Ivanovich, 1729–1796) Gross, and Karl von Bühler (1749–1811) from Württemberg; Kaspar von Saldern (1710–1786), Christoph Wilhelm (Khristofor Ivanovich) Peterson, and Anton Sebastian Struve (1729–1802) from Holstein; Ferdinand Achaz von der Asseburg (1721–1797) from Halberstadt; Imperial Count Maximilian Julius Wilhelm Franz von Nesselrode-Ehreshoven (1724–1810) from Berg; Johann Rzhichevskii (1703?—after 1764) from Poland.
- 23 George Cavalcabo (1717–1799); Panos (Pavel) Maruzzi (1730–1799); Greek Demetrio I Mocenigo del Zante (1723–1793); and Antonios Psaros (Anton Konstantinovich Psaro, ?–1822).
- 24 Offord, Rjécoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 278–290. See also: Petrova, "lazykovye praktiki rossiiskikh i avstriiskikh diplomatov".

- 25 Offord, Rjécoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 174–175, 242–244, 332–333.
- 26 Pisarenko, “‘Skaski’ elizavetinskoi Rossii”, 134–135.
- 27 *Deutschbaltisches Lexikon*, 733.
- 28 The dates of the events are given according to the Old Style calendar.
- 29 Pisarenko, “‘Skaski’ elizavetinskoi Rossii”, 135.
- 30 Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), f. 2, op. 1. d. 1619, fol. 1r–3v.
- 31 *AKV*, vol. 1, 208.
- 32 AVPRI, f. 44, op. 1, 1741, d. 3, fol. 15r, 76r–78r.
- 33 AVPRI, f. 44, op. 1, 1742, d. 4, fol. 134r–135v.
- 34 See for example the intercepted reports of the Imperial envoy J.M. von Neuhaus: AVPRI, f. 6, op. 1, d. 16, fol. 1r–2r, 100r–101v, 206r–206v, 212r–212v.
- 35 *AKV*, vol. 6r, 19r–20r.
- 36 AVPRI, f. 6, op. 1, d. 31, fol. 46v–48r, 155r.
- 37 AVPRI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1688, fol. 2r–2v.
- 38 Pisarenko, “Protokoly priemov”, 76.
- 39 Pisarenko, “Protokoly priemov”, 177–178.
- 40 Pisarenko, “‘Skaski’ elizavetinskoi Rossii”, 135.
- 41 Liechtenhan, *Rossiia vkhodit v Evropu*, 280.
- 42 For comparison, in the same years, a counsellor of the embassy received an annual salary of 1200 rubles, while the minimum salary for the head of the mission started at 3000 rubles.
- 43 AVPRI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1759, fol. 1r–1v; d. 1912, fol. 1r–2v.
- 44 AVPRI, f. 63, op. 1, 1758, d. 4, fol. 1r–1v.
- 45 Pisarenko, “‘Skaski’ elizavetinskoi Rossii”, 134.
- 46 AVPRI, f. 53, op. 1, 1752, d. 2, fol. 87r–87v.
- 47 Anisimov, *Rossiiskaia diplomatiia v Evrope*, 213–214.
- 48 AVPRI, f. 32, op. 1, 1757, d. 6a, fol. 4r–4v.
- 49 H.K. von Keyserlingk to Empress Elizabeth, 15 March 1758: AVPRI, f. 32, op. 1, 1758, d. 6, fol. 86r–87r.
- 50 AVPRI, f. 83, op. 1, 1758, d. 4, fol. 1r–1v.
- 51 J.M. Simolin to A.M. Golitsyn, 4 (15) October 1774: Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA), f. 1263, op. 1, d. 3214, fol. 15r–16r.
- 52 Though he received a knighthood of the Holy Roman Empire with the title of “noble” (Edler von) in 1754, before he was appointed to his first diplomatic post, both brothers were subsequently bestowed with the title of baron. See: URL: <https://gerbovnik.ru/arms/3419.html> (accessed 6 August 2023).
- 53 AVPRI, f. 63, op. 1, 1758, d. 5, fol. 73v.
- 54 AVPRI, f. 63, op. 1, 1758, d. 5, f. 80r–80v.
- 55 AVPRI, f. 63, op. 1, 1758, d. 6b, fol. 9r–9v.
- 56 E.g.: *взма/весма; деревны/деревни; командов/команд; лацарет/лазарет; магацины/магазины; разпорячение/разпоряжение*): AVPRI, f. 63, op. 1, 1758, d. 6b, fol. 457r–461v.
- 57 RGADA, f. 1263, op. 1, d. 3215, fol. 11r.
- 58 AVPRI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1694, fol. 1r–1v.
- 59 AVPRI, f. 83, op. 2, d. 43, fol. 32v–33r.
- 60 AVPRI, f. 83, op. 2, d. 45, fol. 36v–37r.
- 61 AVPRI, f. 53, op. 5, d. 258.
- 62 See the original rescripts to London signed by Catherine II, N.I. Panin, I.A. Osterman, A.A. Bezborodko for the period 1779–1782: AVPRI, f. 36, op. 1, d. 344, 345, 369.
- 63 RGADA, f. 205, d. 2, 3.
- 64 AVPRI, f. 36, op. 1, d. 364, fol. 22r–22v, 30r–30v.

- 65 AVPRI, f. 96, op. 6, d. 486, fol. 1r–3v. Also see I.M. Simolin's report written in London on 4 (15) October 1779: AVPRI, f. 35, op. 6, d. 297, fol. 1r–2v.
- 66 Based on my observations, foreign language proficiency was not a determining factor in the choice of heads of Russian missions abroad, whereas it played a significant role in promoting regular mission employees. In most cases, their professional competence was paramount, rather than patronage. See Petrova, "Vladienie inostrannymi iazykami".
- 67 AVPRI, f. 35, f. 6, d. 357, fol. 1r–2v.
- 68 RGADA, f. 1263, op. 1, d. 3207. fol. 34r–34v.
- 69 Catherine's II rescript from 15 July 1779 concerning Simolin's appointment as envoy to London: AVPRI, f. 36, op. 1, d. 344, fol. 3v.
- 70 The Russian diplomats of foreign origin communicated with Chancellor A.P. Bestuzhev-Riumin in 1744–1758 in German. They corresponded in French with the President of the College N.I. Panin, and with the Vice-Chancellors A.M. Golitsyn and I.A. Osterman, whose tenure spanned the 1760s to the 1780s.

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- AVPRI, f. 35 (Relations between Russia and England), op. 6, d. 297, 357.
- AVPRI, f. 36 (London mission), op. 1, d. 344, 345, 364, 369.
- AVPRI, f. 44 (Relations between Russia and Hamburg), op. 1, d. 3, 4.
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9 Language Choice in Eighteenth-Century Diplomatic Ciphers from Europe*

Michelle Waldispühl and Beáta Megyesi

1 Introduction

Previous studies on historical cryptology have shown that the method of encrypting messages and the type of encryption used varied across centuries and even geographical areas.¹ Moreover, several publications have revealed that using ciphers in diplomatic correspondence was professionalised and institutionalised in several European regions during the seventeenth century. Cryptographic technologies became more complex over time,² and so-called black chambers were established as part of the chanceries, where codebreaking scribes and cryptology experts were employed.³ Important political centres in Italy, such as the papal curia and the Republic of Venice, had a leading role in this process and established codebreaking offices as early as the sixteenth century.⁴

Encrypting messages using ciphers was and still is a method to safeguard secrecy in written communication.⁵ Cryptographic methods have been used throughout history to hide content from third parties. Courts, the church, the military, noblemen, and persons serving as representatives for various institutions with power often encrypted their messages partly or entirely to hide specific information. Codebreaking offices, in contrast, were occupied with the cryptanalysis of intercepted encrypted correspondence.

The encryption was based on a cipher key and applied by the user to encrypt messages. The keys contain a list of plaintext elements, such as alphabetical letters, syllables, morphemes, personal names, and place names with their corresponding code(s).⁶ Plaintext is the text intended for encryption and/or the decrypted text. We differentiate plaintext from cleartext, which is intentionally unencrypted text in a

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cipher document.⁷ In keys, plaintext elements usually occur in a list together with their respective code element. The codes could be represented as digits; alphabetical letters; graphic signs, such as alchemical or Zodiac signs; or a combination of these. In the eighteenth century, digit codes were the most common. Even though already present in the fifteenth century, the use of digits had become increasingly popular and by the eighteenth century had almost displaced the other symbol types for the code(s).⁸

Keys were used to generate the encrypted letters containing a ciphertext; that is, to produce a sequence of code elements based on the key. Encrypted sources could be entirely encoded with or without spaces marking word boundaries, and punctuation marks could be removed to hide sentence boundaries. Instead of encrypting the entire message, the encrypted sequences were often embedded in cleartext. Encrypting letters was a burdensome procedure, and by this means, time and effort could be saved.

Even though encryption was common in diplomatic and political correspondence and throughout history, historical cryptology is still a marginal field. The systematic study of historical encrypted documents was only initiated in recent years.⁹ Historical research on cryptographic practices emphasises that hiding information and using different tools for secrecy is not only a communicative practice in particular circumstances but may also convey a form of power. Only a small range of people sharing a key were authorised to access the hidden content in ciphers.¹⁰ Keeping messages secret also meant exchanging the key to encrypt and decrypt messages securely. Sometimes, the keys were folded several times and sewn into an envoy's pocket.¹¹

Even though there has been some research into cryptography in historical diplomacy, little attention has been paid to the choice of languages in such documents. Only in Láng can one find a list of language choices made in cryptographic documents from Hungary in 1526–1711 with brief notes on possible reasons for the choices (see Section 4.3).¹²

This paper investigates ciphers and keys from the eighteenth century used for diplomatic correspondence in Europe. We seek to answer the following questions: What encoding languages are targeted in the cipher keys? What languages are employed in the ciphertexts? How do language choices differ across different geographical areas? How frequent are multilingual encrypted documents? What are the functions of the respective languages in such documents?

Next, in Section 2, we present the cipher collection that this study is based on. In Section 3, we describe our method, and in Section 4, we summarise the language choices and usages in encrypted sources in European diplomatic correspondence. We give a broad quantitative overview of language choices made in diplomatic ciphers from Europe and evaluate possible explanatory factors for the choices in different contexts. Additionally, we present some cases to illustrate the use of languages in encrypted correspondence. In Section 5, multilingual documents are examined. We discuss our findings, the limitations of our study, and possible future research trajectories in Section 6.

2 Cipher Collection

The documents on which this study is based were collected and digitised within the interdisciplinary project “DECRYPT: Decryption of historical manuscripts”, which aimed to collect, analyse, and decrypt historical ciphers from the early modern period.¹³ All ciphers and keys included in this study are available through the DECODE database. They can be analysed using a set of tools developed for the (semi-)automatic analysis of ciphertexts and keys.¹⁴ Each record in the collection is described with metadata developed particularly for encrypted historical sources. The metadata include information about the origin (country and city); the current location of the source; when the document was created or used; and the source’s author, sender, and recipient in cases where the information is available. In addition, the record is classified according to its type, whether it is a key or a ciphertext, the symbols used for encryption, the underlying plaintext languages, and the language(s) contained in the non-encrypted parts of the source.

In the current study, we have included all encrypted sources from the eighteenth century uploaded to the DECODE database before 18 October 2021. We post-prepared the data according to the quality criteria required for this study. Hence, we excluded (i) documents that only contain instructions on how to use ciphers without any ciphertexts or keys present; (ii) non-diplomatic documents, such as the Copiale cipher created by oculists in Germany in the eighteenth century; and (iii) documents for which the context of use was unknown. The final collection comprises 766 records, of which 420 are ciphertexts and 346 are keys.

The collection under investigation in this study is held in archives in present-day Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, and the Vatican City State. The sample is opportunistic: we took what we could obtain access to. Some sources had already been uploaded to the DECODE database by historians and linguists working on cipher documents, such as the data from Saxony (Germany), Hungary, the Netherlands, and the Vatican City State. For these datasets, metadata are relatively well documented. Other records have been ordered from archives and collected by researchers focusing on cipher keys, such as the dataset from the HHStA from the Habsburg monarchy. Here, metadata are still fragmentary, and little is known about the use of these documents. We lack metadata on where and by whom single documents were written for a considerable part of the sample. Whenever metadata on senders, recipients, and addresses are available, we specify and consider this information in the analysis of language choices in specific regions. Since the languages in these records can be identified, the data are relevant for our aim of giving a quantitative and comparative overview of language choices in European cipher documents. To assess reasons for language choices, however, we restrict our analyses to records for which senders and recipients are known.

Table 9.1 presents an overview of the material used in this study. The last two columns show the number of cipher keys and ciphertexts from the various geographical areas in Europe. The sample contains an almost evenly distributed number of ciphertexts and keys, but the distribution varies significantly across the

Table 9.1 Overview of the datasets investigated in this study

<i>Region</i>	<i>Archives</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of keys</i>	<i>Number of ciphertexts</i>
Habsburg monarchy	Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien, Austria (HHStA)	1686–1812	195	5
Saxony	Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Germany (HStAD)	1723–1799	38	1
Hungary	National Archives of Hungary (MNL) Ráday Archives (RL)	1692–1711	107	219
The Netherlands	The Hague Nationaal Archief (NA) The Hague Koninklijk Huisarchief (KHA)	1751–1809	6	117
Vatican City State	Vatican Secret Archive	1717–1767	0	78
Total			346	420

regions. For example, we do not have any keys from the Vatican and very few from the Netherlands. In contrast, we have many keys and very few ciphertexts from the Habsburg monarchy and Saxony.

3 Language Identification in Ciphers

Analysing historical languages in cipher documents is challenging for several reasons. Language changes over time at all levels. Words change form and meaning, content words may become grammatical markers, and the word order in sentences may also vary over time. Even within the same period, languages show remarkable variation in use. Before spelling was normalised, it could vary: different spelling conventions could be applied to the same language and even by the same scribe.¹⁵ We need philological and historical competence to interpret the written sources in their historical context. An additional challenge for ciphertexts is that they need to be deciphered first: only then can the language be determined. In this study, we only included texts that had already been deciphered. In some manuscripts, the decoded plaintext is part of the historical document and often included inter-linearly. As soon as the plaintext of the ciphertext is recovered, language identification does not usually pose any challenges, since we can rely on lexical and/or syntactic information.

However, the situation is different in key documents that usually consist of mainly lexical items that include different parts of speech, various types of proper

names, numbers, and other smaller linguistic units such as syllables.¹⁶ Hence, in most cases, we lack any syntactic context in key documents. Only in rare cases can keys be linked to ciphertexts where the application of the key and the language chosen can be identified. The language of the key, moreover, does not need to correspond to the language in a ciphertext based on that key, as the example of a ciphertext letter sent by Maximilian II in 1575 showed; the Latin key was used for the German plaintext.¹⁷ However, for our sample of the eighteenth century, we do not have any known example where a cipher key is linked to a particular ciphertext document (see also footnote 18).

Most keys contain personal names and nouns denoting persons. The identification of the languages in names is particularly challenging. In our work, we have concluded that personal names and nouns denoting persons are unreliable for indicating the plaintext language in the keys. The language of the names can be bound to the respective person's regional and linguistic background, which is likely to be different from a possible language of communication, especially in a diplomatic context. This problem can be illustrated with a key from the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Vienna dated 1692 and used in the correspondence with the Queen of Spain. In some cases, the languages of personal names, including titles, are given in the respective language of the named person's origin (e.g., *Duc d'Orleans*, *Marques de los Balbases*, *Fürst von Dietrichstein*), and in other cases, translations are given (e.g., *der König in Spanien*, *König Jacob in Engellandt*).

For language identification in keys, therefore, it must be considered that *nomina propria* and content words are more prone to language contact than function words and grammatical items. Hence, for identifying plaintext languages in keys, we focus primarily on function words, such as pronouns or conjunctions, if these are present in the keys and only secondarily consider content words and names.

Some keys contain only the letters of the alphabet or syllables as plaintext elements. These encoding systems can potentially be used cross-linguistically; in these cases, therefore, the plaintext language is indicated as "not language specific".¹⁸

To analyse language choices more finely, we distinguish between the underlying language of the encrypted information as the plaintext (i.e., the decrypted ciphertext) and the non-encrypted sequence of text embedded in the message as the cleartext.¹⁹ In keys, plaintext elements are the words or other linguistic units to be used for encryption with the attached codes, while instructions, dating, ownership, and any explanatory sections or titles are treated as cleartext in this study.

The term "multilingual documents" refers to keys or cipher documents that use more than one language as plaintext or cleartext (see Section 5).

For this study, we manually identified the languages in the documents by analysing each document separately. For this analysis, we relied on the digital pictures available in the DECODE database. For 494 documents, transcriptions that student assistants had provided supported the research. In the future, when more machine-readable text is available, we envisage automatic language identification of cipher documents using historical language models.²⁰

4 Language Choice in Different Regions in Europe

There are apparent differences in which languages occur in diplomatic cipher documents in the various European regions in our sample. In what follows, we first present a quantitative overview of the language choices in the complete dataset and then discuss each region separately, including available metadata, selected examples, and possible explanatory factors underlying the choices of the respective languages.

Figure 9.1 and Figure 9.2 present the distribution of the different languages in documents from the five regions. We have not included any metadata on authors and senders for this overview. We aim to offer a comparison of language choices in the different European regions on a quantitative basis before we discuss reasons for language choices in the following subsections. The overview of language choices presented here is limited to what we can say based on the data available in the DECODE database. We do not want to make a general claim. The number of languages and their distribution might change in the future when more data are included.

In Figure 9.1, plaintext languages are divided into various holder countries; in Figure 9.2, cleartext languages are illustrated. In most regions analysed here, more than one language was used in enciphered diplomatic correspondence. The exception is the Vatican State, where only Italian occurs. French is the most widely used language, occurring in all multilingual regions. In all the cases, however, the respective local language (i.e., German in Saxony and the Habsburg monarchy, Hungarian in Hungary, and Dutch in the Netherlands) is used more frequently than French. Dutch and Hungarian are the languages only occurring locally in their respective regions of origin. Like French, German, Italian, and Spanish are used

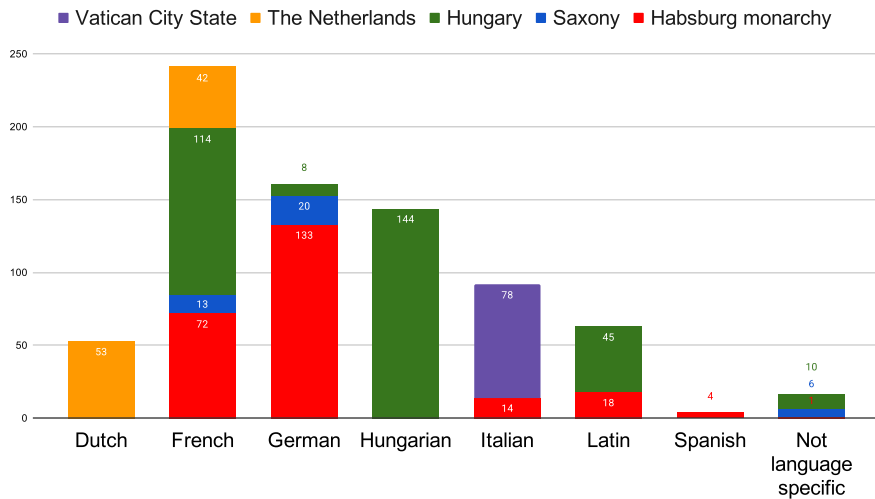


Figure 9.1 Plaintext languages in the documents from the DECODE database.

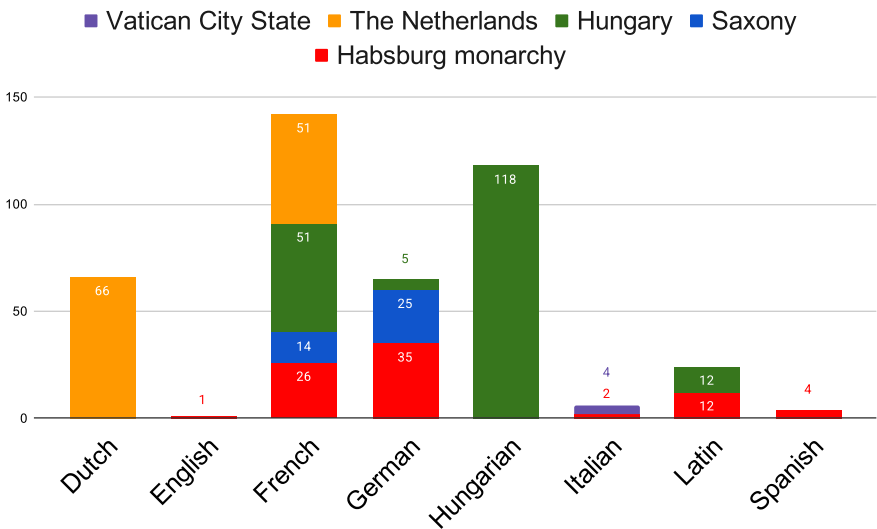


Figure 9.2 Cleartext languages in the documents from the DECODE database.

in regions where these languages are less common. Moreover, and not surprisingly, Latin also functions as an international language; however, in our dataset, it is found only in the Habsburg monarchy and Hungary.

While the overview in Figures 9.1 and 9.2 compares the language choices in the different regions over the whole of the eighteenth century, Figure 9.3 illustrates the occurrence of single languages over the course of this period. In this figure, however, only the data from the Habsburg monarchy, Saxony, and the Netherlands

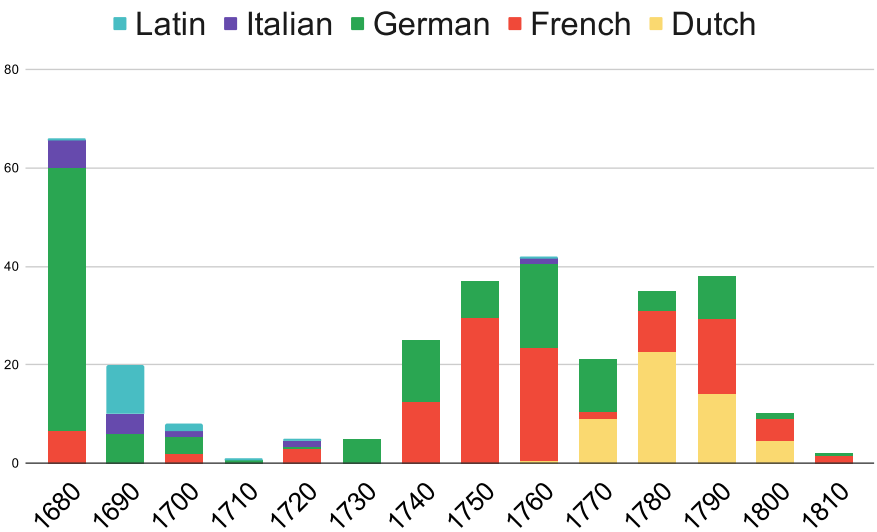


Figure 9.3 Timeline for the languages in documents from the Habsburg monarchy, Saxony, and the Netherlands.

were included. The time range covered by the data from Hungary is too short, and the data from the Vatican City State are concentrated in the 1710s (with 56 of the total 78 documents), so we chose to exclude them.

Even though in Figure 9.3 absolute numbers are compared, we can determine various trends. First, the use of Latin in cipher documents in our sample dramatically declined from the 1700s and rarely occurred thereafter. In contrast, French was increasingly used after the 1740s. The single occurrences before that were found in documents from the Vienna archive. Dutch appears frequently only in records from the 1770s and later, even though we have data from the Netherlands from the 1750s onwards. In the subsequent sections, we describe the trends for each geographical area.

4.1 Saxony

Our dataset from Saxony contains 38 keys and one ciphertext document dated between 1723 and 1799. They are all held by the Saxon Main State Archive in Dresden (Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, *infra* HStAD) and originate from the former Electorate of Saxony. The languages used in the documents are German in roughly two-thirds of the cases and French in one-third (see Table 9.2). The distribution of languages for plaintext and cleartext is similar: German is slightly more frequent as a cleartext language than a plaintext language.

The layout and content of the keys are remarkably uniform. They all fit on one or two manuscript pages and consist of 1–2 columns with the code for encoding (“*Zum Chiffriren*”, “*Pour Chiffre*”) and 1–2 columns for decoding the same code (“*Zum Dechiffriren*”, “*Pour Dechiffre*”).²¹

For this dataset, we have metadata about senders and recipients and the dating for most of the records. The documents, all cipher keys apart from one, were with few exceptions issued either by the Electorate of Saxony or the Saxon-Polish Court; 54% ($n = 21$) of the dataset stem from the 1760s, roughly 25% ($n = 10$) from the later decades of the eighteenth century, and 21% ($n = 8$) from the 1720s to the 1750s. Interestingly, the occurrence of German and French is chronologically distributed. Before 1760, French dominated. Only one document from the 1720s used German as a cleartext language, while the others (seven in total) from the period 1720–1759, all keys, had French as a cleartext language and, where a key was language specific, even as a plaintext language. The 1760s were the turning point where both German and French were in use. German was slightly more frequent as both a cleartext language (13 German vs. seven French) and a plaintext language (10 German vs. nine French). In 1770–1800, all documents were issued in German

Table 9.2 Plaintext and cleartext languages in documents from Saxony

	<i>Plaintext</i>	<i>Cleartext</i>
<i>German</i>	20 documents (60.6%)	25 documents (64.1%)
<i>French</i>	13 documents (39.4%)	14 documents (35.9%)

only. Hence, in our sample, we can observe a language shift from French to German in diplomatic key documents with a transitional period of co-existence of both languages in the 1760s. This concurrence of French and German can also be found in cleartexts in this period. In two documents, instructions for the implementation of the cipher are given in German while plaintext elements are in French.²²

The recipients of the keys in German were all Saxon envoys, most of them in German-speaking regions (Vienna, Regensburg, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, or Mainz) and a few in England, Copenhagen, and Saint Petersburg. The cipher documents issued in French were also used for communication with Saxon envoys in German-speaking regions (e.g., Karl Georg Friedrich Flemming, Saxon envoy in Vienna), but among the recipients of French keys, we also find external persons of diplomatic interest, such as the Russian envoy Nicolai Repnin.

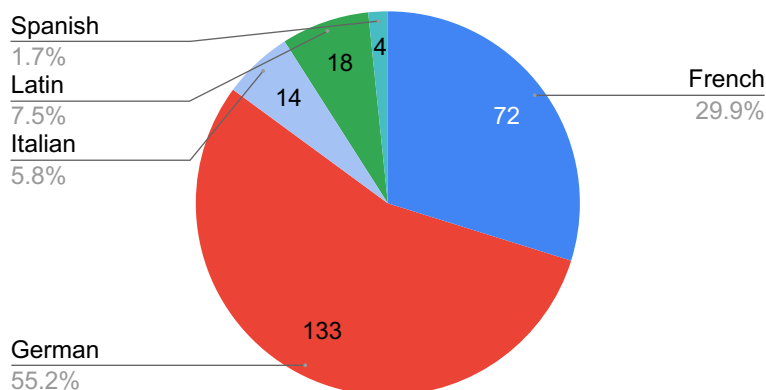
We have analysed only a small sample, and representative conclusions about language choices can be drawn only when future studies based on more records confirm the aforementioned tendencies. However, according to Anne-Simone Rous,²³ a historian specialising in historical cryptology and the history of Saxony, the language shift in diplomatic correspondence from French to German can be linked to the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 when the reforms of the *Rétablissement* cut ties with the former Augustinian era and its Francophile ideas. The change in the language of communication can be interpreted as an indexical sign of the dissociation from the former regime, both inward-looking and directed to external partners. Rous notes that French had become dominant in Saxon diplomacy following the reorganisation of the Black Chamber in 1703. However, formal decrees for this language policy have not yet been found, and further research in the archives is necessary to challenge language choices determined by top-down orders. Moreover, the characteristics of the transitional period in the 1760s with bilingual documents instead illustrate a movement without strict rules and room for more variation in use.

4.2 The Habsburg Monarchy

Our dataset from the Habsburg monarchy includes 200 documents held by the Austrian Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv and consists mainly of keys (195 documents) and only a few ciphertexts (5 documents). The languages used in these documents are illustrated in Figure 9.4. German is the most frequently used language, followed by French. These two languages are also mixed in a considerable number of documents (16.5% of all documents, $n = 33$), a language practice discussed in more depth in Section 5. The other languages, Latin, Italian, Spanish, and English, are far less frequent.

Unfortunately, the metadata for authors and recipients of the documents from the Austrian archive are minimal. The authors are known for only 38 documents, and in only 42 cases are the recipients indicated. Despite the restricted data, some conclusions on possible decisive aspects for language choices can be drawn. The main factor for the choice of Italian and Spanish in encrypted correspondence is the origin of the addressee. These two languages are used in communication with

(a) Plaintext languages in the Habsburg monarchy



(b) Cleartext languages in the Habsburg monarchy

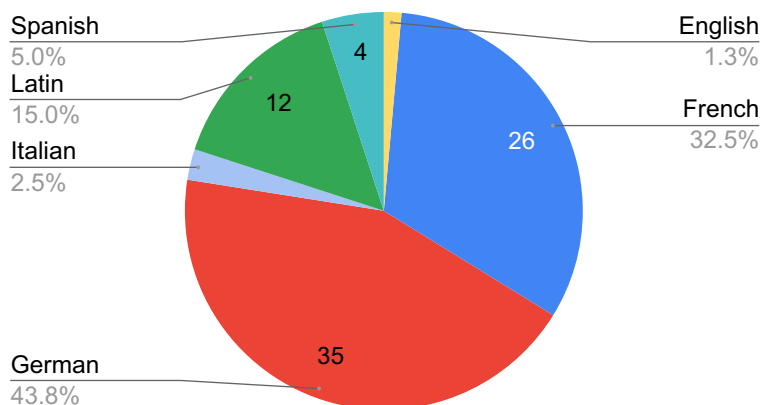


Figure 9.4 Plaintext (a) and cleartext (b) languages in documents from the Habsburg monarchy.

representatives in the respective language regions only (e.g., in a set of keys shared with Cardinal Fulvio Astalli for Italian and with Marquis de Este or Don Simon de Santander for Spanish).

In regard to possible explanations for the uses of German and French, we can only give tentative tendencies. Both languages occurred throughout the century. The use of French increased from the 1740s, while German was more balanced over the whole century. One of the first French keys in our dataset is from 1709 and was shared with Jean Philippe Eugène de Mérode, Marquis de Westerloo, a Belgian soldier who at that time was serving as a *Feldmarschall* for the Habsburg monarchy.²⁴ Among the early French documents is also a set of French keys that was in use during the 1740s–1750s in correspondence with the Habsburg envoys in

Naples (Paul II Anton Esterházy), Madrid (Esterházy), Saint Petersburg (Bretlach, possibly Baron Johann Franz von Pretlack), and Lisbon (Georg Adam, Count, later Prince von Stahrenberg).²⁵ Interestingly, we also have a German key that was shared with some of the same envoys, which suggests that these envoys could issue encrypted letters in both languages.²⁶ Unfortunately, we do not have ciphertexts connected to these keys; therefore, we cannot tell what factors were crucial for the individual language choices. The remainder of the French documents date mainly from the 1760s onwards and were used in correspondence with Habsburg envoys and external allies.

German is the most dominant language in the material kept in Austria, and, since it was the primary language of administration in the Habsburg chanceries, it might have served as the first choice for internal communication. However, because we still need to acquire a complete set of metadata on the sender, author, and addressee for this dataset, we cannot be more specific now about the use of German. Only when the documents have been studied by historians and the contexts of the documents are more thoroughly investigated will a more precise picture be possible in a future study.

Joseph II issued an edict in 1783/84 that declared German to be the official language instead of Latin for administration and education in the whole Habsburg monarchy (also in regions of the Hungarian Crown). All officers and employees had to be able to document German language skills within a time frame of two years. This action was motivated by progressive and centralistic reasons and not driven by ideological or hegemonic ideas on language.²⁷ While the general increase in the use of German due to the edict might have resulted in a decrease in the use of Latin, our data suggest that French had room to establish itself in the diplomatic domain. Monolingual keys in Latin can only be found at the beginning of the eighteenth century and in the 1690s. However, Latin is the language that occurs most often in combination with other languages, in later documents too (see Section 5). The fact that French gained more ground in the 1800s is also illustrated by the tendency to use it more often for internal documentation and instructions. In a French key titled “Chiffre chiffant françois. 1805. pour Petersbourg”, for instance, the instructions are given in French only.²⁸ Unfortunately, it is not clear if the key was intended for internal communication with Habsburg envoys in Saint Petersburg or for correspondence with the Russian authorities. An earlier key used in 1779 for Count Cobenzl, envoy of the Habsburg monarchy in Saint Petersburg, does not have instructions, but both the plaintext and cleartexts are bilingual German and French. Earlier keys usually have instructions in German; see Section 5 for examples.

4.3 Hungary (Rákóczi's War of Independence)

The material from Hungary includes 326 documents, 219 ciphertexts, and 107 keys, and they all originate from one particular historical context, namely Ferenc II Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703–1711) against the Habsburgs. The anti-Habsburg movement aimed at gaining Hungarian independence. With only one

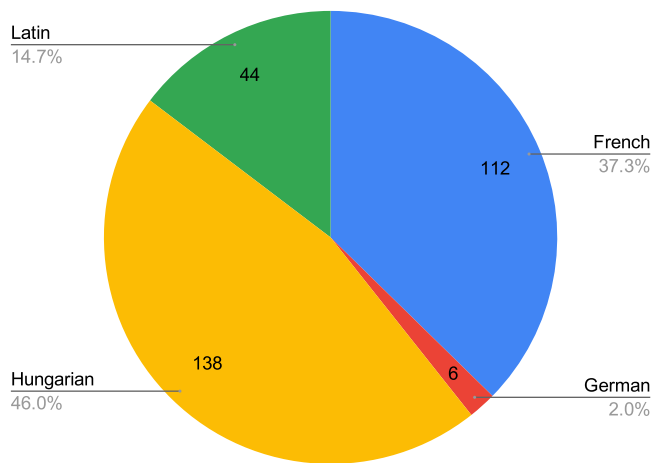
exception,²⁹ the documents date from the first decade of the eighteenth century. Ferenc II Rákóczi himself is the author responsible for nearly two thirds of the collected documents (197, including the records he issued using the pseudonyms Nathanáel Sylver and Pompeo Cesoni), followed by two diplomats in Rákóczi's administration, János Pápai and Ferenc Horváth, who authored 75 keys and ciphertexts. Hence, the documents here include encrypted letters and keys used in communicating with participants in the Hungarian movement. The sources were collected during Benedek Láng's work on cryptology in early modern Hungary and uploaded to the DECODE database (for a more detailed description of the sources and the data collection framework, see Láng).³⁰

In this material, we find plaintext in Hungarian in 46% of the cases, French in 37%, Latin in 15%, and German in 2%. The same languages appear in cleartext but in slightly different proportions; see Figure 9.5 for more detail. Hungary was part of the Habsburg monarchy in the eighteenth century, with Latin and German as its primary languages of administration. However, regarding the context of the documents analysed here, used between actors of and in connection with the Hungarian War of Independence, it is not surprising that we have only a few Hungarian cipher documents in German. Along with Hungarian, French, the language of diplomacy and culture, as well as the preferred language of Ferenc II Rákóczi in communication with his Polish allies,³¹ dominated instead.

An interesting observation is that when writing under his pseudonyms Nathanáel Sylver or Pompeo Cesoni, Ferenc II Rákóczi used French exclusively. Unfortunately, the recipients of the 111 documents in French are mostly unknown. We know of only nine keys that Ferenc II Rákóczi exchanged with French personalities including diplomats (e.g., Louis XIV himself, Charles de Ferriol, and the Marquis de Bonnac, both French ambassadors). Among the nine documents where German was chosen either as a plaintext or cleartext language, we find three that were issued by delegates of the Habsburg monarchy. However, Ferenc II Rákóczi too used German with persons of German-speaking origin or affiliation, such as the painter Adám Mányoki.³² Hence, the choice of German seems selective and addressee oriented.

Latin is used in a few letters as a single language or in combination with Hungarian or German. In keys, Latin is used more frequently at the expense of Hungarian, as illustrated in Figure 9.6, where the proportion of the two languages is equal (34% each). Latin was the primary language of all official business in early modern Hungary. It functioned as a "neutral" *lingua franca* both for written and spoken communication between all the different linguistic and ethnic populations living on Hungarian territory.³³ This status of Latin might come to the fore in its more prominent use as plaintext in cipher keys in comparison to cipher documents in general. Keys were documents often used over a longer period and potentially also in several letters. The genre might have been more conservative regarding language conventions than were ciphertexts in letters. Moreover, Latin keys could also be used to write in other languages such as German, as we can show in a case study of Habsburg encrypted correspondence in the 1570s.³⁴ Since we do not yet have established links between key documents and ciphertexts in

(a) Plaintext languages in Hungary



(b) Cleartext languages in Hungary

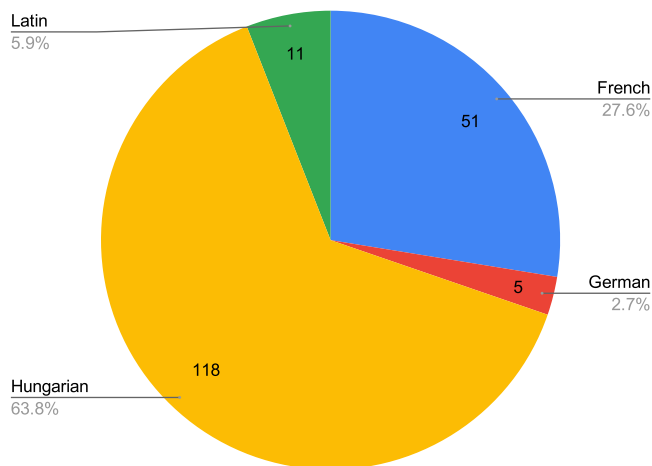


Figure 9.5 Plaintext (a) and cleartext (b) languages in documents from Hungary.

our database, we cannot answer the question of how keys were applied to cipher-texts in practice.

The dominant use of Hungarian by Rákóczi and his allies during the War of Independence can certainly be explained by the fact that the movement was driven by Hungarians. As far as we can tell from the documents where metadata are available, communication in the other modern languages, French and German, was addressee oriented.

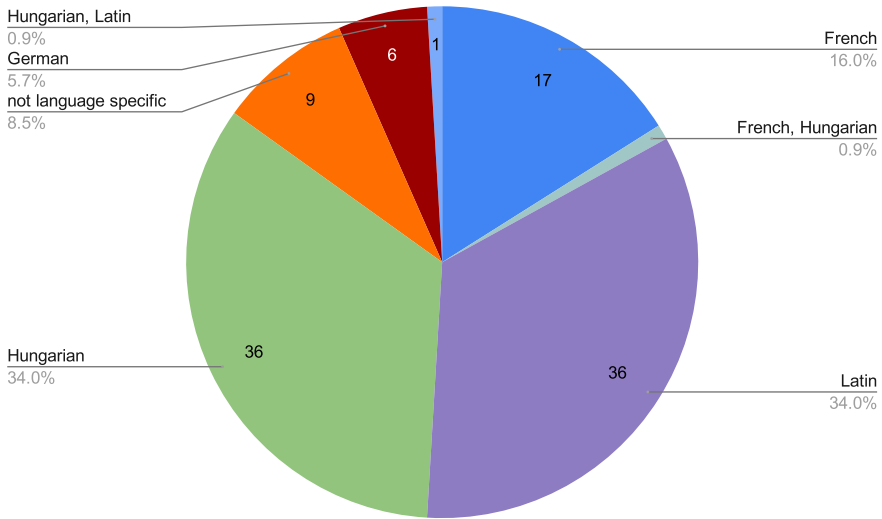


Figure 9.6 Plaintext languages in keys from Hungary.

4.4. The Netherlands

Our dataset from the Dutch Archives in The Hague (Koninklijk Huisarchief [KHA] and Nationaal Archief) includes mainly ciphertexts (117 documents) and only a few keys (6 documents). Hence, it is possible here to see how ciphers were implemented. The languages chosen in the documents originating from the Netherlands are either Dutch or French (see Table 9.3), and in a few documents, both languages occur, as we explain in the next section. The proportion of the two languages in plaintext and cleartext is similar. We can note that Dutch occurs slightly more frequently than French.

All the documents originate from the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. As illustrated in Figure 9.7, in our dataset, a shift from French as the only language in the 1750s to a predominant use of Dutch from the 1770s can be observed. Even though our sample is too small to draw general conclusions, this tendency of language choices would tie in with a general development of cultural nationalism that began in the 1750s and resulted in a modern Dutch nation-state that was founded in the first decade of the nineteenth century.³⁵

Table 9.3 Plaintext and cleartext languages in documents from the Netherlands

	Plaintext	Cleartext
<i>Dutch</i>	48 documents (51.1%)	64 documents (56.6%)
<i>French</i>	36 documents (42.9%)	49 documents (43.4%)

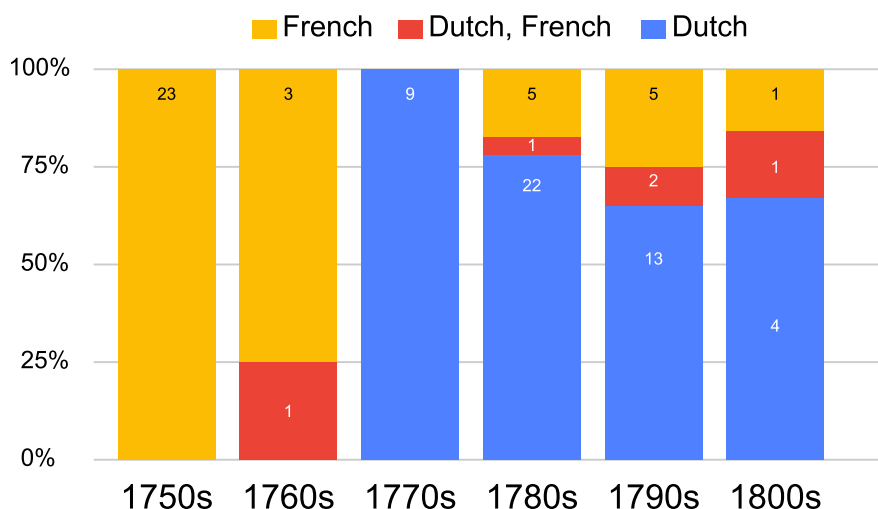


Figure 9.7 Chronological distribution of languages used in the cipher documents from the Netherlands.

However, including senders and recipients as a factor for language choices, the results point to another decisive factor in our material. Specifically for this dataset, we can link the language choices to the users, since our metadata for senders and recipients are largely complete. It can be seen that there is a strong correlation between external persons and the use of French, while Dutch was used between internal partners. This pattern is illustrated in the six keys in the sample. Three of them are in Dutch, all authored by Samuel Egbert Croiset, a cryptologist at the Black Chamber of The Hague,³⁶ and sent to different Dutch envoys. The other three keys are in French. While for one of them we lack information on the author and sender, the other two can be associated with external partners. One was used by Wilhelmina, Princess of Prussia, in 1800, and the other was authored in 1782 by the Prussian mathematician and cryptologist Johann Friedrich Euler, who from 1782 served as a cryptologist for the Stadholder William V. This key was supposedly intended for communication with “some of the Republic’s emissaries or ambassadors abroad” even though the exact implementation of this key is unclear.³⁷

The Dutch ciphertexts were all exchanged between internal partners. Most of the letters were sent by Dutch envoys stationed in Constantinople, Lisbon, Stockholm, Saint Petersburg, or London to Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel (1737–1800), Grand Pensionary of Holland, or Hendrik Fagel de Oude, the *greffier* of the States General.

Some documents from the Archives in The Hague were written by non-Dutch diplomats. Of the total of 37 documents with French as the plaintext language, 18 were either authored by French or Prussian envoys or sent to Prussian or Saxon partners, such as Frederick Augustus II, Elector of Saxony, or Frederick II, King in Prussia. Nine ciphers in our sample from The Hague archives were written

by Louis Auguste Count d’Affry, the French ambassador in The Hague in 1757, to Antoine Louis Rouillé, foreign secretary of King Louis XV. Hence, for these documents, both sender and receiver were French, one of whom was based in The Hague. Seven other documents in French originate from the Dutch ambassador to Berlin, Arend Willem baron van Reede, in letters sent to Spiegel and the Stadholder Prince William V in 1787–1793. Van Reede’s use of French is conspicuous in comparison with his peers, since he was of Dutch origin. His addressees were Dutch, and he also used Dutch ciphers in another letter from the same period available in our sample (a letter sent to Fagel and the Secret Committee). Future research based on a larger sample is needed to determine van Reede’s language choices. Only three ciphertexts in French were exchanged between Dutch actors. Two actors, Frederik Gijsbert Dedem van de Gelder (1743–1820), Dutch ambassador in Constantinople, and Jan Willem Hogguer (1755–1838), Dutch ambassador in Russia, used both French and Dutch in their correspondence. In one letter written by van de Gelder to Spiegel, on 26 March 1790 from Warsaw, French was used as the plaintext language for the letter’s main body and Dutch in the formulaic salutation and closing parts of the letter.³⁸ The last page of the letter is shown in Figure 9.8. At the top, we can see the ciphertext in digits and the decrypted plaintext in French above the single codes. The cleartext parts at the end of the letter are in Dutch.

4.5 The Vatican State

The 78 encrypted documents (no keys), ranging from between one and 21 pages, come from the Vatican State and belong to four different series of letters between the Vatican and its nuncios in Portugal, comprising eight letters, and Spain with 70 letters. All the documents are in Italian, regardless of whether the text is cleartext or plaintext. In several of these letters, however, it is not clear whether the Italian text is cleartext (i.e., whether it was part of the original message as non-encrypted text) or decrypted plaintext. Annotation of the type of text in the DECODE database is probably not consistent and would need a thorough review in the future.

While there is a body of literature on papal ciphers in earlier centuries, little is known about encrypted correspondence from the eighteenth century.³⁹ Lasry et al. showed that the complexity of papal ciphers decreased in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries relative to the preceding century, where the main focus lay on security and the diversity of ciphers.⁴⁰ Their study focused on cipher types and complexity; however, language choices were not addressed.

Nevertheless, the language choice in our sample of internal correspondence between the nuncios who served as diplomatic representatives of the Holy See in Portugal and Spain is routinely Italian. This language choice is consistent with other letters between papal nuncios placed in Vienna and Warsaw and between nuncios in Vienna and Regensburg and the Secretary of State in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ The consistent use of Italian in our sample points to the fact that Italian was used as a working language for correspondence between the Secretariat of

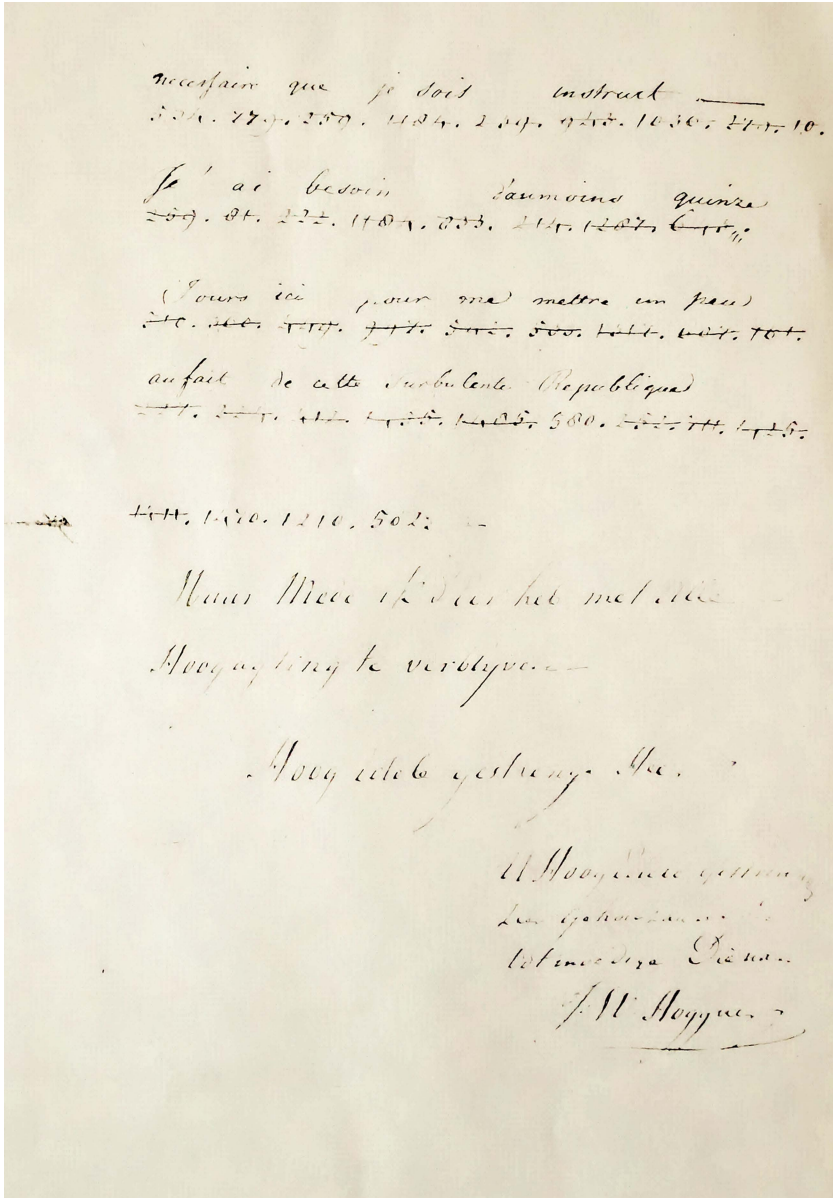


Figure 9.8 A letter from the Netherlands employing French in plaintext and Dutch in cleartext.

Note: NA, 3.01.26 (L. P. van de Spiegel), no. 203.

State and the Holy See's nuncios; further research, especially in comparison with chancery practices of the Secretariat, is needed to corroborate the explanation for this language choice.

5 Multilingual Cipher Documents

In this section, we first give an overview of the frequency of multilingual documents over various regions. Secondly, we present a few cases to discuss the functions of the different languages in multilingual diplomatic correspondence.

5.1 Frequency and Occurrence of Multilingual Documents

Multilingual documents are significantly less frequent than monolingual documents in our sample. In fact, nearly 90% ($n = 685$) of the cipher documents are monolingual, and only 9.7% ($n = 74$) of the documents employ several languages. The remaining documents consist of keys that are not language specific (i.e., keys containing plaintext elements that can be used cross-linguistically, such as letters of the alphabet, numbers, or syllables).

In our corpus, multilingual usages occur most frequently in documents from the Habsburg monarchy. Twenty-eight percent ($n = 56$) of all documents in the Austrian archive include combinations of German with French, Italian, or Latin. Most frequent is the combination of German and French (in 36 documents). In the Netherlands, only a few cipher documents (7 out of 123; 5.7%) show a combination of Dutch and French, and in Hungary, only eight multilingual documents, three ciphers and five keys (2.6%), have been identified. Among the documents from Saxony, there are three keys with a combination of German and French.

Even though monolingual practices dominate in diplomatic correspondence throughout Europe in our sample, the multilingual documents reveal interesting and relevant details about language use and a certain hierarchy of languages in their status as international languages during the eighteenth century.

As outlined in Section 4, French is the most internationally used language in the documents analysed here. This tendency is also mirrored in multilingual documents. French is involved in most cases, usually together with the respective local language.

5.2 Function of the Different Languages

Although French was the dominant international language in European diplomacy, a qualitative assessment of the multilingual documents shows the importance of local languages for internal documentation and instructions.

In a multilingual key from Saxony, for instance, both German and French were used as cleartext languages to indicate with whom the key was shared. The plaintext elements of the key are entirely in French. On the two extra pages preceding the key table, however, indications for internal documentation are given first in German and then in French. On the first page is written “Copenhagener Chiffre mit dem Kammersherren von Volckersahm item mit dem Legationsrath von der Lith [presumably, Gabriel von der Lieth] zu Hamburg”, and on the second page “Chiffre avec M.^r le Chamb.^{an} de Voelckersahm à Copenhague. it: avec M.^r de Lith à Hambourg. 1761”. Hence, even though the key was in French, German indications were added and even precede the identical text in French.

A similar practice can be seen in French keys from the Habsburg monarchy where we find cleartext with metadata and instructions in German. In one example from 1745, the key is indicated as “Französische Circularziffer von anno 1745”, and the instructions on how to use the key and implement the French cipher in practice are given in German.

Likewise, there is a Dutch instruction to a bilingual Dutch and French key from the Netherlands. The key was authored in 1765 by Samuel Egbert Croiset, a cryptologist in the service of the Batavian Commonwealth, and sent to Joost Godefroy Graaf van Rechteren, Dutch envoy extraordinary in Saint Petersburg. It is stated in the Dutch instruction that the key is intended to be used for both the Dutch and the French languages.⁴² These examples clearly show that the local languages, German or Dutch respectively, were the main languages of the users of these keys.

In another case from the Habsburg monarchy, however, a key issued in 1750,⁴³ instructions were given both in French and German. In addition to the key, we find an instruction regarding the use of the key written in French and entitled “Note pour le chiffre françois” and another short note in German, “Teütscher Ziffer”, with some comments on nulls (*errantes*). The document information is also given in German, and it says that the key was handed over to several envoys in cities such as Naples, Saint Petersburg, Madrid, and Lisbon. This example might indicate not only that the same key was used for both French and German ciphertexts, but also that a knowledge of German was not necessary in order to use the key. The metadata are only given in German, however, which implies that German was used for documentation.

Because we have not yet been able to establish direct links between keys and ciphertext letters in our sample, we do not know how the plaintext languages given in the key were implemented in ciphertext letters.⁴⁴

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a quantitative study of language choice in encrypted sources in the eighteenth century originating from different geographical areas in Europe. We studied the language choices in 766 ciphertexts and keys now stored in archives in Germany (Saxony), Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, and the Vatican.

The material clearly indicates that various languages were used for communication in diplomatic correspondence, and the preferred languages varied across regions. French was the most widely used language internationally. It occurs in cipher documents in all regions included in our sample—with the Vatican State as the only exception—and it was used both with internal envoys and ambassadors and with external persons of diplomatic interest. Another international trend we showed was the decreasing use of Latin as a plaintext language in the eighteenth century. Our sample also shows the importance of the respective local languages for instructions for using ciphers and for cataloguing and describing diplomatic sources. The significance of the respective local languages is stable across areas and time.

In the analysis of decisive factors for language choices, we found differences between the geographic areas. As well as their use as a means of documentation and instruction, local languages were used even more for internal communication with people sharing the same language. This factor was relevant in the communication of the Hungarian anti-Habsburg movement, and tendencies for such a practice could also be determined in the materials from the Habsburg monarchy, the Netherlands, and the Vatican State. This factor is not stable, however. In Saxony, for instance, the francophone cultural affiliation of the Augustinian period and the reaction against this era after the Seven Years' War from 1763 onwards were pivotal for the choice of either French or German in diplomatic cipher documents, rather than the territorial language.

Documents employing more than one language were rare in our sample. Nevertheless, using several languages in encrypted diplomatic correspondence was common in all regions except the Vatican. Not surprisingly, the samples from the Habsburg monarchy and Hungary display highly multilingual language use, and in the materials from the Netherlands and from Saxony, two languages were present, namely French and the respective local language.

Our study is limited in several respects. The results are based on a rather small sample—766 encrypted documents—of diplomatic correspondence from five geographical areas. The sample is not evenly distributed among the areas, so it cannot be balanced. However, the sample gives an explorative impression of encrypted sources used for diplomatic correspondence in the eighteenth century in Europe.

Regarding factors for language choice, we could only investigate features of sources with consistent and complete metadata. Many documents, however, need more information about the sender and recipient, and sometimes the dating of the document could be clearer or more precise. More detailed metadata about the dating and where and by whom the documents were used would further increase the quality of our study and make the results more accurate historically.

To capture a fine-grained picture of the different functions of languages in cipher sources, we distinguished between languages of the plaintext (decrypted text or text intended for encryption) and the cleartext (the non-encrypted text in cipher documents). This distinction is sometimes problematic and hard to make. We noted, for instance, that Latin is used throughout the keys for conventionalised headings such as *duplices*, *errantes*, and *nomina propria*. These terms were used even if the cleartext and plaintext languages were not Latin. These cases, however, were not consistently considered as multilingual documents.

In the analysis, we focused primarily on function words to define the language(s) of the encrypted source. The main reason behind this methodological decision was the fact that content words and proper names such as personal or place names, especially in keys, are often loanwords or in the language of the person's origin or the place's location, making language identification more difficult. However, while function words help identify the potential language of correspondence in a key, content words and names give more information about the source's topic and reveal the content of the message. In the future, therefore, we would like to analyse the use of content words in the encrypted sources and investigate the vocabulary

used over time in various geographical areas and among different types of correspondence. This would require transcribed sources to automate the process and allow large-scale studies. Such a study would contribute to identifying diplomatic vocabulary and the kind of content that was meant to be concealed.

Lastly, in this study, we focused on encrypted sources. It would be instructive to compare the language use to historical, non-encrypted diplomatic documents in the investigated regions. Is it the case that the languages and the combinations of languages used in encrypted diplomatic writing also apply to other text types of the same period and geographical area? Can we find differences in document types, genres, and regions? More research is needed to be able to answer questions about language use. More digitised and transcribed data with consistent and extensive metadata would make it possible to conduct large and detailed quantitative studies of language use in our history.

Notes

- 1 Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, 106–156; Megyesi et al., “Key Design”, 127–129; Megyesi et al., “Keys with Nomenclatures”, 33–36.
- 2 Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, *Passim*; Megyesi et al., “Key Design”, 127–129; Desenclos, “Écrire le secret quotidien”, 85–86; Lång, *Real Life Cryptology*, 38–49; Megyesi et al. “Keys with Nomenclatures”, 36–37.
- 3 Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, 157–174.
- 4 Lång, *Real Life Cryptology*, 44. For a detailed history of ciphers in sixteenth-century Western diplomacy, see Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, 108–124.
- 5 Bullard, “Secrecy, Diplomacy and Language”, 85; Jucker, “Trust and Mistrust in Letters”, 227–229.
- 6 Megyesi et al., “Key Design”, *passim*; Megyesi et al., “What Was Encoded”, *passim*; Megyesi et al., “Keys with Nomenclatures”, *passim*.
- 7 See Megyesi et al., “The DECODE Database”, 72; and Mikhalev et al., “What is the Code for the Code?”, *passim*: for the terminology of historical cryptology we use in this paper.
- 8 Megyesi et al., “Keys with Nomenclatures”, 9.
- 9 Haug, “Korrespondenz in Diplomatie”, 743; Braun & Lachenicht, “Introduction”, 8; Elukin, “Keeping Secrets”, 119; Bauer, “The New Golden Age”, 99–100.
- 10 Lång, *Real Life Cryptology*, 133; Bullard, “Secrecy, Diplomacy and Language”, 85.
- 11 Stålhane, *Hemlig Skrift*, 159, 169.
- 12 Lång, *Real Life Cryptology*, 55.
- 13 Megyesi et al., “Decryption of Historical Manuscripts”, *passim*.
- 14 Megyesi et al., “The DECODE Database”, *passim*. The database project started in 2015, and by February 2026, 10,077 records had been registered. The oldest document dates from the thirteenth century, and the most recent is from the twentieth century. A significant number of documents is found in the eighteenth century. A statistical overview of the sources in the database is given on its website: <https://de-crypt.org/decrypt-web/RecordsList> (accessed 6 February 2026).
- 15 Waldispühl, “Variation and Change”.
- 16 Megyesi et al., “What Was Encoded”, 162–165.
- 17 Kopal & Waldispühl, “Deciphering Three Diplomatic Letters”, 113–116.
- 18 Judging from our data, we do not know how these systems were technically implemented for encoding. It is possible and probable that there are keys in the database that fit certain cipher documents. However, to date, we do not have any links between key and cipher documents in the database.

- 19 Megyesi et al., “The DECODE Database”, 72; Mikhalev et al., “What is the Code for the Code?”, 135.
- 20 Megyesi et al., “Decryption of Historical Manuscripts”, 552–553; Megyesi et al., “Historical Language Models”, *passim*.
- 21 HStAD, 10024, loc. 8236/11, fol. 149r.
- 22 HStAD, 10024, loc. 8236/11, fol. 149r; 10024, loc. 08236/11, fol. 3r.
- 23 Personal communication. For a general account on ciphers in Saxon diplomacy see Rous, *Geheimdiplomatie*, *passim*.
- 24 HHStA, Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 14, fasc. 20.ii, fol. 43r.
- 25 *Ibid.*; Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 15, fasc. 21, fol. 19r, 20r–23r, 106r–119r.
- 26 HHStA, Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 15, fasc. 21, fol. 18r.
- 27 Hutterer, “Sprachenpolitik”, 165; Wiesinger, “Sprache und Nation”, 473–474.
- 28 HHStA, Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 17, fasc. 24, fol. 140r–147r.
- 29 MNL, G15 Caps. A.1, fasc. 24, fol. 75r–124r.
- 30 Láng, *Real Life Cryptology*, 51–56.
- 31 Láng, *Real Life Cryptology*, 55.
- 32 Ráday Levéltár (Ráday Archives, Budapest, RL), C64-4d2-25, fol. 18r.
- 33 Heinz, “Sprachverhalten in Ungarn”, 84–85; Evans, “The Politics of Language”, 202–207.
- 34 Kopál & Waldispühl, “Deciphering Three Diplomatic Letters”, 111–116.
- 35 Rutten et al., “Implementation and Acceptance”, 264–265.
- 36 De Leeuw, “The Black Chamber”, 1–30.
- 37 De Leeuw, “Johan Friedrich Euler”, 261. According to De Leeuw, the key was only used in letters in 1792–1793 by the Dutch emissary in Berlin, G.A. Van Reede to the Stadholder’s secretary, T.I. de Larrey.
- 38 Nationaal Archief (National Archives, The Hague, *infra* NA), 3.01.26 (L. P. van de Spiegel), no. 203.
- 39 Lasry et al. “Deciphering Papal Ciphers”, 481–482.
- 40 Lasry et al. “Deciphering Papal Ciphers”, 527–530.
- 41 Curcuruto, “Francesco Buonvisi”, 238; and, e.g., Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (The Vatican Apostolic Library, VAL), Barb. lat. 7032 that contains the encrypted correspondence of the papal nuncio at Regensburg, Gaspare Mattei in the year 1641 (authors’ field work, unpublished).
- 42 NA, Legatie Rusland, no. 114 (1765).
- 43 HHStA, Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 15, fasc. 21, fol. 20r–23r (1750).
- 44 Case studies on the encrypted correspondence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries indicate that the language of the key and the plaintext did not need to be the same. In letters of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian II in 1575, a Latin key was used to encipher a letter in German (see footnote 17), and in enciphered letters between the Swedish Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna and his envoy Johan Adler Salvius in Germany during the 1630s, a German key was used to encrypt Swedish-Latin letters (see Waldispühl, “Verschlüsselte Briefe”).

Unpublished Sources

BAV—*Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (The Vatican Apostolic Library)*
BAV Barb. lat. 7032.

HHStA—*Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Home, Court and State Archives), Vienna, Austria*
HHStA, Staatskanzlei Interiora, Chiffrenschlüssel, Kt. 14, Fasc. 20, fol. 366–369.
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 HStAD, 10024, Loc. 08236/11, fol. 3. URL: <https://de-crypt.org/decrypt-web/RecordsView/935> (accessed 26 October 2022).

MNL—*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltára (National Archives of Hungary), Budapest, Hungary*
 MNL, G15 Caps. C, Fasc. 39, fol. 54–55. URL: <https://de-crypt.org/decrypt-web/RecordsView/834> (accessed 26 October 2022).
 MNL, G15 Caps. C, Fasc. 43, fol. 39. URL: <https://de-crypt.org/decrypt-web/RecordsView/580> (accessed 26 October 2022).
 MNL, G15 Caps. A.1, Fasc. 24, fol. 75–124r. URL: <https://de-crypt.org/decrypt-web/RecordsView/480> (accessed 26 October 2022).

NA—*Nationaal Archief (National Archives), The Hague, the Netherlands*
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Part IV

Languages in Contacts Between European and Non-European Powers



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10 Linguistic Practice in Dutch Diplomacy in Taiwan, 1624–1662

Christopher Joby

The Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded by charter in the Dutch Republic in 1602, was a trading company with powers to wage war and conclude treaties outside Europe.¹ It can therefore be understood as a quasi-state actor, or as a marine mercantile organisation acting with state authority. From 1620 onwards one of its main aims was to trade with China. In 1622, it failed to capture the Portuguese colony of Macau, but eventually established a trading post in southwest Taiwan, operating it between 1624 and 1662.

Although its initial priority in Taiwan was to trade with China and Japan, the VOC gradually increased the area of the island under its control for political and economic reasons. During its colonial period in Taiwan, the VOC needed to engage diplomatically with representatives of several actors, illustrating the close relationship between trade and diplomacy in the encounter between Europeans and East Asians in the early modern period.

This chapter will analyse the VOC's linguistic practices in its interactions with these other actors in Taiwan. It begins by investigating the available sources and then provides a chronological account of the VOC's activities in Taiwan. Interpreters played a vital role in the VOC's linguistic practices, and so the chapter analyses who the VOC employed as interpreters and in what context. It then examines the language practices in communications between the VOC and other actors by language. These included Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Sinitic varieties, and the indigenous Formosan languages, which belong to the Austronesian language family, and non-verbal communication.

The picture that emerges is a complex one. Some actors with whom the VOC engaged were state or quasi-state actors, while others were not. The VOC itself functioned as a trans-state actor. Its representatives were diverse and included the Governor of Taiwan, his Council, merchants, and even missionaries, who were all VOC employees. Moreover, the range of languages used was extensive, a sign that Taiwan was a multilingual environment. It necessitated the employment of many interpreters, who were important actors in this story, and whose role as linguistic intermediaries will be examined in detail.

This chapter works at the intersection of diplomatic and language history, analysing the languages and language practices in the VOC's diplomatic acts in seventeenth-century Taiwan. It is therefore primarily concerned with the “diplomatic discourse in its linguistic dimension, i.e., the written verbal dimension of the

language of diplomacy”.² Historians disagree as to when the nation-state emerged.³ However, if we take the general view that it emerged in the nineteenth century, then this chapter, like others in this volume, provides a way into thinking about the diplomatic history of “prenational relationships”.⁴ While work has previously been done on diplomatic practice between Europeans and non-Europeans in East Asia, it has typically paid little attention to the use of language in diplomatic acts.⁵ I hope therefore that this study adds to our understanding of language acts in the diplomatic sphere in the early modern period and more specifically those performed in East Asia. In doing so, it is embedded in New Diplomatic History, which focuses on the processes rather than the results of diplomatic activity, and tries to avoid the “presentist, teleological biases” that, according to John Watkins, are present in earlier diplomatic histories.⁶ Furthermore, it offers a way into thinking about diplomacy not merely as the management of international relations, but also as an extension of social interests, forces, and environments.

Sources

Several primary sources are available for this study. The indigenous people who inhabited Taiwan did not have writing systems before the arrival of the Europeans. Therefore, one methodological issue that this chapter needs to address is the fact that the authors or groups of authors of these sources were mainly Europeans. They therefore viewed the diplomatic acts analysed in this chapter through the different lens of their own experience and tried to fit what they observed into their own “existing knowledge grids”.⁷ This does not so much affect information about which languages were used, but it may affect the authors’ interpretation of the relevant context. The chapter therefore tries, wherever possible, to identify and mitigate bias in these sources.

Letters are the most important primary source we have. The letters that the VOC’s representatives in Taiwan wrote and received in relation to diplomatic activity with other actors had to be translated into and from Dutch and other languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Classical Chinese (*wenyanwen* 文言文). The VOC version of the treaty that it concluded at the end of its colonial period in Taiwan was in Dutch. Both letters and this treaty have been published in edited collections of documents from the Dutch and Spanish colonial periods: Blussé, Van Opstall, & Ts’ao (eds.), *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia, Taiwan* (4 vols.) (henceforth DKZ); Blussé, Everts & Frech (eds.), *The Formosan Encounter: Notes on Formosa’s Aboriginal Society. A Selection of Documents from Dutch Archival Sources* (4 vols.) (TFE); and Borao (comp.), *Spaniards in Taiwan* (2 vols.) (SIT). The DKZ is the factory journal that VOC administrators kept at the Company’s base at Fort Zeelandia.⁸ It also provides metalinguistic comments about language practices between the VOC and the other actors in the diplomatic sphere. For example, the DKZ reproduces accounts of the *Landdagen*, which were meetings held by the VOC for leaders of the indigenous Formosan villages under its control. These accounts indicate which Formosan languages were used to transmit the VOC’s message to the Formosans. The TFE includes transcriptions

and translations of letters written by VOC Governors and administrators. The SIT provides transcriptions and translations of the letters exchanged between the VOC and Spanish Governors of Taiwan towards the end of the Spanish colonial period. One other useful source is material relating to the Dutch church mission in Taiwan. This was published in Dutch towards the end of the nineteenth century and in English translation in 1903 by the British missionary, William Campbell.⁹

The VOC in Taiwan: A Short History

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to trade with and colonise islands in the East Indies in the early sixteenth century. Towards the end of the century, Dutch ships arrived in the archipelago and began to compete with the Portuguese for trade and challenge their claim to a monopoly of East Asian trade.¹⁰ In 1602, the VOC was formed to co-ordinate their activities in an organised manner. By 1609, it had ejected the Portuguese from the Moluccas and taken control of most of the spice-producing areas of the islands.¹¹

The VOC also established itself on Java, where the first Dutch fleet had arrived in 1596. In 1619, it attacked Jayakarta, razed it to the ground, and began rebuilding it under the name Batavia (now Jakarta).¹² Under the Governor-General of the East Indies, Pieter Jansz Coen (1587–1629), the VOC expanded northwards with the aim of establishing a base in China and driving the Portuguese out of East Asian waters (see Table 10.1). This was because of the commercial threat that they posed and because at the time Portugal and Spain formed the Iberian Union, with which

Table 10.1 VOC Governors-General of the Dutch East Indies and Governors of Formosa/Dutch Taiwan 1619–62

<i>Governor-General and tenure</i>	<i>Governor of Formosa/Taiwan and tenure</i>
Jan Pietersz. Coen 1619–1623	
Pieter de Carpentier 1623–1627	Martinus Sonck 1624–1625 Gerrit Fredericksz. de Witt 1625–1627
Jan Pietersz. Coen 1627–1629	Pieter Nuyts 1627–1629
Jacques Specx 1629–1632; Hendrick Brouwer 1632–1636	Hans Putmans 1629–1636
Antonio van Diemen 1636–1645	Johan van der Burch 1636–1640 Paulus Traudenius 1640–1643 Maximiliaen Lemaire 1643–1644 François Caron 1644–1646
Cornelis van der Lijn 1645–1650	Pieter Anthonisz. Overtwater 1646–1649
Carel Reyniersz 1650–1653	Nicolaes Verburch 1649–1653
Joan Maetsuijcker 1653–1678	Cornelis Caesar 1653–1656 Frederik Coyett 1656–1662

Note: Chiu, The Colonial “civilizing process”, 301.

the Dutch Republic was engaged in the Eighty Years' War. In 1622, a VOC fleet attacked the Portuguese colony of Macau on the south coast of China. The fleet was repelled and withdrew to the Penghu Islands 澎湖群島, or Pescadores as the Portuguese called them, where the VOC built a fort on the Fengguiwei 風櫃尾 peninsula. Here, it could trade with the Chinese at Macau and attack Spanish galleons in the straits between China and Taiwan.¹³ However, the Governor of Fujian 福建 Province did not want the VOC to remain there; in 1624 it agreed to withdraw to Taiwan. On 30 August, VOC ships sailed into Tayouan Bay in southwest Taiwan. The VOC built a base on a spit of land surrounding the bay—it became known as Fort Zeelandia—to act as an entrepôt for trading with Chinese merchants and provide a stopover for ships sailing between Java and the VOC trading post in Japan. This was an important moment for Taiwan, marking a *Wendepunkt* in its history, when it began its transition from an island inhabited largely by Austronesians to one whose destiny would be shaped by non-Austronesian people.

There were about 2,800 VOC employees in Taiwan, including 2,200 soldiers, various grades of merchants, clerks, and Dutch Reformed church ministers. The first two ministers, George Candidius (in Taiwan 1627–1631 and 1633–1637), and Robert Junius (1629–1643), who were both graduates of Leiden University, lived in the village of Sinckan near Fort Zeelandia and learnt the Sinckan dialect of Siraya. While their main purpose was proselytisation, their work also had a diplomatic dimension, as they were charged with keeping an eye on the activities of the Formosans and alerting the members of the Council of Dutch Taiwan if they sensed trouble brewing, such as possible rebellions. Furthermore, Candidius modelled a lifestyle which he hoped that the Sinckandians would follow and which would attract them to the Christian faith. In this sense, he projected soft power, to use a phrase associated with Joseph Nye, although from another perspective it was an attempt at social control.¹⁴ Junius worked not only as a minister and missionary, but also as a merchant and administrator selling hunting licences, and a military commander leading troops to quell any uprisings against Dutch rule.

The VOC established its colony in Taiwan only twenty-two years after it was founded. It was, therefore, still developing its diplomatic practices and there was an element of improvisation in some of its diplomatic acts. The colony was ruled by the Council of Dutch Taiwan or Formosa (Dutch: *Raad van Formosa*), which convened at Fort Zeelandia. The head of the Council was the Governor. His main role was to make a profit and to safeguard and increase that profit either by diplomacy or by force. He was in some sense a merchant diplomat.¹⁵ The Governor and the Council of Dutch Taiwan were responsible to the directors of the Dutch East Indies in Batavia, the Council of the Indies (*Raad van Indië*), whose head was the Governor-General (see Table 10.1). They in turn reported to the Gentlemen Seventeen (*Heeren XVII*), the VOC's board of directors or *bewindhebbers*, which met in Amsterdam or Middelburg in the Dutch Republic. The VOC was a public company, whose shares were listed on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. It gained its charter from the States-General which met in The Hague¹⁶ and was the most powerful political body in the Dutch Republic. There were other reporting lines. For example, the missionaries were also responsible to the Amsterdam Dutch

Reformed Church classis. These details illustrate the length of reporting lines in the VOC. One consequence of this was that decision-making affecting the VOC colony in Taiwan was sometimes very slow.

In Taiwan, the Dutch encountered various groups of indigenous Formosans who spoke Austronesian languages, Japanese merchants, and several thousand Chinese mainly from Fujian Province, most of whom were traders, fishermen, pirates, and smugglers. They spoke the Sinitic variety, Hokkien, a Southern Min language 閩南語 and had been trading with—and living amongst—Formosans on the western Taiwanese coastal plain before the arrival of the VOC.

The VOC had not intended to engage to any great degree with the Formosans. Rather, its initial policy towards them was one of conciliation and the neutralising of any possible threat that they posed to its maritime trading activity. The Formosan ethnic group with whom the VOC had the most contact were the Siraya, who lived close to Fort Zeelandia. Their language, spoken in the area around modern-day Tainan 臺南, belongs to the East Formosan sub-group of the Austronesian language family.¹⁷ The Siraya in one village, Sinckan, obeyed the village elder, Dika. He had been stirring up opposition to the presence of the VOC and the Governor, Pieter Nuyts (in office 1627–1629), sent a party to Sinckan to arrest him. He escaped, and Nuyts threatened to burn down the village unless Dika was handed over. He offered them a way out, however, resorting to local conventions and requesting that they hand over pigs and paddy rice as a punishment. Such a threat-based approach, backed by Dutch soldiers, was a tool that the VOC frequently took from its “diplomatic” kitbag, although it also illustrates that its representatives could improvise by appropriating local customs.¹⁸

The village of Mattau was much larger than Sinckan and was its chief enemy. Among the Siraya villages, it was the one that resisted Dutch rule most strongly. In 1629, Mattauers had slaughtered a group of Dutchmen. It took the VOC six years to assemble sufficient troops to take revenge on Mattau. In 1635, assisted by 500 soldiers from Batavia, the VOC finally brought Mattau under its control.¹⁹ This, to return to Joseph Nye, was a case of the Dutch exercising hard power. Robertus Junius wrote a report to the VOC directors in Amsterdam providing a blow-by-blow account of the subjugation of Mattau and other villages in the region.²⁰ The pacification of the Siraya villages made it easier for the VOC to expand its territory to the north and south of Zeelandia. At the end of 1635, Governor Putmans held what has been euphemistically termed a “peace ceremony”, which was something more akin to a show of strength, at which the terms of peace were agreed with the Mattauers.²¹ By the end of 1636, Governor Putmans had informed Batavia that the VOC now controlled more than fifty villages in southwest Taiwan.²² In October 1636, Putmans held another “peace ceremony”, to which he invited the elders of thirteen villages that the VOC had subjugated, and at which he introduced his successor, Johan van der Burch.²³ This ceremony would subsequently evolve into the *Landdag*, an example of what Leonard Blussé calls “rule by spectacle”.²⁴ Similarly, Tonio Andrade calls the *Landdag* (plural *Landdagen*) a “political spectacle”, whilst Chiu Hsin-hui calls it a “civilisation fair”, for “on these occasions, the Formosans were encouraged to become more “civilised and obedient””.²⁵ In this sense, the

Landdag acted as a vehicle for cultural transfer introduced by the VOC as the agent of this transfer. Furthermore, the use on the one hand of the *Landdag* as the VOC's principal mode of communication with Formosan village elders, and on the other hand letters to communicate with state and quasi-state actors, underlines the asymmetry of the Company's relationship with the former. Another way of understanding this distinction is that while the VOC used what Max Weber calls "legal-rational authority" in its dealings with members of literate societies such as the Chinese and Spanish, they could not use this to secure the obedience of the non-literate Formosans.²⁶

To the southeast of Taiwan lie the Philippines. The Spanish Empire had occupied parts of these islands since the middle of the sixteenth century. As the Eighty Years' War was still being fought, the Spanish in the Philippines feared that the Dutch might launch an attack from their base in Taiwan. They therefore sent a small armada in 1626 to occupy northern Taiwan. José Borao neatly sums up the reason for the Spanish presence in Taiwan as "trade, the counterbalance of Dutch power, and missionary access to China and Japan".²⁷ This in some sense opened another front in the Eighty Years' War, far removed geographically from the European theatre of war.

The Spanish colony in northern Taiwan was part of the Spanish Empire. Its inhabitants were therefore subjects of the Spanish king, Philip IV (r. 1621–1665), and the colony was a state actor. Initially, it achieved some success, building forts in northeast and northwest Taiwan and establishing schools and churches, chiefly linked to the Dominican mission. The Spanish bought services and rice from the Formosans and Chinese sangleys, paid for with silver brought from Manila, shipped from Mexico on the famous Manila galleons. However, by the mid-1630s, the Governor-General in the Philippines decided that the colonial project was not sufficiently profitable and so began to withdraw resources and manpower from Taiwan.²⁸ In 1642, the Dutch, sensing an opportunity and still at war with Spain, drove the Spanish from the island.

After this, the VOC was the only European actor in Taiwan. According to its sources, by 1646 it controlled 217 villages with a population of 61,696, and by 1650—315 villages with a population of 68,567.²⁹ Soon, however, new threats emerged, this time from the Chinese.

First, during the Dutch period in Taiwan, the number of Chinese had increased dramatically because of political instability on the mainland towards the end of the Ming dynasty and the Dutch need for migrant labour to work as leasehold farmers. By 1661, there were probably around 35,000 Chinese on Taiwan, although one estimate puts the figure as high as 50,000.³⁰ Ten years earlier, in 1651, the VOC doubled the poll tax for Chinese settlers to half a real per month. This provoked a revolt led by Guo Huaiyi 郭懷一 or Fayet. On 8 September 1652, the Chinese attacked the Dutch settlement of Provintia at Saccam near Fort Zeelandia. The next day, the Dutch counter-attacked with the support of indigenous soldiers. The final day of reckoning was 12 September when 4,000 Chinese farmers lost their lives. The Dutch subsequently reinforced their base at Provintia, replacing the bamboo

wall with the brick building that still stands today in central Tainan called Chihkan Tower (赤嵌樓 *Chiqianlou*).³¹

Secondly, one of the main maritime trading partners of the VOC in Taiwan was the Chinese general, Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功, known as Koxinga 國姓爺 1624–1662).³² He controlled a politico-commercial network, which functioned as a quasi-state actor. His combination of commercial and political power led Tonio Andrade to call him a “merchant-prince”, although it may be more appropriate to call him a merchant-cum-warlord.³³ Koxinga remained loyal to the Ming after the last Ming ruler, the Chongzhen Emperor 崇禎帝 (r. 1627–1644), committed suicide in Beijing 北京 in 1644. As Qing forces swept south to wipe out opposition, Koxinga’s base at Xiamen 廈門 in Fujian Province, some 300 kilometres from the Taiwanese coast, came increasingly under threat. In April 1661, after the appearance of strange portents, such as the sighting of a mermaid near Tayouan Bay, he led a fleet to attack Zeelandia.³⁴ After an eight-month siege, the VOC surrendered on 1 February 1662, ending its colonisation of Taiwan. Koxinga inaugurated the Zheng 鄭 regime in Taiwan, which lasted for twenty-one years until the Qing regime (1683–1895) supplanted it.

The VOC was a relatively new type of organisation whose main purpose was commercial gain, but which also performed functions usually associated with state actors. Something similar could be said of Koxinga’s trading empire. They were both quasi-state actors. The Governor of Spanish Taiwan, on the other hand, was the representative of a state actor: the Spanish Empire ruled by the King of Spain. Nevertheless, such distinctions were usually ignored, and the VOC Governor of Taiwan dealt with the Spanish Governor as his analogue. The VOC developed diplomatic relations with the headmen of many Formosan tribes, too. Given the advanced weaponry at the VOC’s disposal, these relations were by contrast asymmetric.

Interpreters

To facilitate its diplomatic acts with these and other actors, the VOC often used the services of interpreters. These fulfilled two main functions: facilitating conversations between people who did not share a common language and translating letters and other documents. They also functioned as reservoirs of local knowledge. In some cases, they did not translate directly into or from Dutch but used an intermediate language such as Portuguese. At the time, the VOC had not developed a professional cadre of interpreters like, for example, the dragomans in the Ottoman Empire³⁵ but employed people with the necessary knowledge to act as linguistic intermediaries on an *ad hoc* basis. This can be understood as a practice within the emerging “language tradition” of the VOC.³⁶

In the East Indies in the seventeenth century, four main groups provided the VOC with interpreters. First, some Dutchmen learnt Malay in prison. Frederik de Houtman (1571–1627), the author of the first Dutch-Malay primer, published in 1603, falls into this category. Secondly, some of the better-educated sailors

and other VOC employees learnt the local language, probably through interacting with native speakers. Thirdly, church ministers, who were often university graduates, learnt the local language. Fourthly, some *mestizos* had learnt two languages at home and used this knowledge as interpreters. The quality of the interpreters' work varied, and misunderstandings often arose. In the eighteenth century, a growing population of children of Dutch fathers and indigenous women provided a steady stream of potential interpreters. Misunderstandings, nevertheless, still occurred.³⁷

In Taiwan, some of the interpreters employed by the VOC fell into similar categories, while others did not. One VOC employee who worked as an interpreter, Joost van Bergen, originally from Gdansk/Danzig, belongs to the second category.³⁸ He began his VOC career as a corporal and *ziekentrooster*, i.e., someone employed to provide consolation to the sick and dying. Over time, he became proficient in Siraya and was employed as an interpreter. Hendrick van Roderkercke, a Dutchman who worked as a teacher in the Siraya village of Tirozen, was also employed as an interpreter.³⁹ Another interpreter, who worked for the VOC early in the colonial period, was a *mestizo* from Macau, whose knowledge of Portuguese was useful to the Dutch.

For two decades, the VOC tried to introduce Siraya (chiefly the Sinckan dialect) as a Language of Wider Communication (LWC) in the south, but without success. In 1657, the Dutch church authorities agreed to teach those in the south in their own language, Tapouliangh. Furthermore, they agreed to employ native speakers to assist the minister Antonius Hambroeck (in Taiwan 1648–1661) in learning the three languages of southern Taiwan, i.e., Tapouliangh, Parruan, and Tonghotaval. However, as the Dutch only had a few years left in Taiwan, there was little time for progress.⁴⁰

The VOC employed Chinese people as interpreters.⁴¹ There is evidence that some Chinese spoke Siraya or a mixture of Siraya and Chinese Hokkien.⁴² Furthermore, early Dutch visitors to Taiwan recorded that some Siraya spoke “Chinese”, i.e., Hokkien. The Chinese interpreters and the Siraya may therefore have communicated in Chinese, a mixture of Chinese and Siraya, or Siraya. In a report that he made on the Penghu Islands in 1623, the commander of the Dutch fleet, Cornelis Reyersen (1588–1624), named his interpreter as Hong Tsieu-sou.⁴³ Such interpreters acted not only as linguistic go-betweens but also as knowledge go-betweens or brokers, furnishing the VOC with useful local information, such as where to come ashore and what food could be found in Taiwan.⁴⁴

While the employment of these interpreters to overcome the linguistic divide between the Dutch and Formosans seems to have been productive, the first Governor of Taiwan, Martinus Sonck, nevertheless recognised the importance of learning local languages to trade in Taiwan. He therefore wrote to the Governor-General in Batavia in 1624 that “some of the Company’s boys [should] learn the language of this land [i.e., Siraya] and also learn to speak and understand the Chinese language”.⁴⁵ As the section below on Formosan languages makes clear, however, the VOC continued to make extensive use of interpreters to communicate with the Siraya and other Formosans.

In a letter written in Danshui or Tamsui 淡水 in northwest Taiwan to Zeelandia in 1643, a VOC employee describes how, after capturing northern Taiwan from the Spanish, the Company planned to find interpreters to communicate with local Formosans. The author notes that he and his colleagues would look for one or two Spanish soldiers, who had lived among the Formosans and who might therefore be familiar with their language. Up to this point, they had used the services of a Filipino from Cagayan province who, the author observes unflatteringly, was better at cutting bamboo cane than serving as an interpreter.⁴⁶ In the event, the VOC employed Chinese people and Formosans as interpreters. One Chinese man, Soequa, spoke Spanish, probably because he had traded with the Spanish in northern Taiwan or had lived in Manila. The VOC employed him to work as an interpreter and clerk for eight reals and forty pounds of rice per month. One Formosan, who worked as an interpreter for the VOC after 1642, had been given the baptismal name of Teodoro by the Spanish.⁴⁷

Finally, as the VOC increased its control, first over Siraya villages, and then beyond Siraya territory, it became increasingly evident that there was a significant number of Formosan languages and several dialects within those languages, in some cases varying from village to village. Therefore, in October 1643, the Council of Dutch Taiwan wrote to the VOC Directors in Batavia that it was desirable to teach the Formosans in Dutch, just as the Portuguese taught their language in their colonies.⁴⁸ By 1646, the Company had begun to take steps to make Dutch an LWC in the areas that it controlled. It was not until 1648, however, that Dutch was officially introduced into schools in Taiwan. This was part of a wider shift in VOC language policy to introduce Dutch in its schools.⁴⁹ As early as November 1648, the church consistory at Zeelandia reported that the experiment to teach Dutch to local people was very successful.⁵⁰ Over time, this would have led to the use of Dutch in broader society in Taiwan and to its functioning as a hegemonic language.⁵¹ However, given that the VOC was expelled from Taiwan in 1662, there was only a limited time for this to happen.

Languages That the VOC Used in Taiwan

Using the sources described above, the chapter now analyses which languages VOC employees used in diplomatic acts in Taiwan, in what context and with what results. The choice of language that state and quasi-state actors use for diplomatic purposes is not arbitrary but regulated. In 1582, in an early move towards building a new independent state, separate from Spanish hegemony, the Dutch States-General adopted Dutch as its official language.⁵² Dutch therefore became the chancery language of the nascent Dutch Republic.⁵³ This may be one reason why most correspondence of the VOC, which was established by a charter granted by the States-General and was in some sense a trading arm of the Dutch state, was written in Dutch.⁵⁴

Many VOC employees came from outside the Dutch Republic and probably had first languages other than Dutch. Above, I mentioned Joost van Bergen from Danzig. Another employee, Maerten Wesselingh, came from Copenhagen,⁵⁵ and

there were also Swedes, Scots, and others from German-language regions in Taiwan. Nevertheless, these European employees probably used Dutch as an LWC between themselves, although the use of other European languages cannot be ruled out.

Another “language tradition” that emerged in the early years of the VOC was the use of languages other than Dutch, especially Portuguese, as intermediate languages, or what I call *linguae mediae*, to communicate with the representatives of local actors in East Asia.⁵⁶ Portuguese already functioned as a language of international commerce and diplomacy in East Asia before the arrival of the Dutch in the late sixteenth century.⁵⁷

We have few details, however, of how VOC employees learnt Portuguese. The variety of Portuguese used in East Asia was often creolised or Low Portuguese, which functioned as an LWC amongst slaves and freed slaves in the region.⁵⁸ VOC employees may have picked this up from the slaves or other, lower-ranking VOC employees. Some VOC employees possibly learnt Portuguese from Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. The Dutch statesman Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687) had at least a passive knowledge of Portuguese. He may have picked this up from the Portuguese Jew Rachon, who gave him Spanish lessons. Alternatively, given how close Spanish and Portuguese are, he may simply have used his knowledge of Spanish to read Portuguese, with the occasional help of a dictionary or textbook.⁵⁹

Portuguese was used in several diplomatic acts in the VOC’s early involvement in Taiwan. In October 1623, a VOC expeditionary force sailed from the Penghu Islands to Taiwan. An unnamed Chinese interpreter, probably Hong Tsieu-sou, who accompanied the expedition, spoke Portuguese. The Dutch used Portuguese to communicate with the Chinese, who in turn spoke Chinese, Siraya, or a mixture of Chinese and Siraya with the Formosans.⁶⁰

In contrast to Taiwan, the Penghu Islands were within Ming jurisdiction, and more specifically since 1367 had been a dependency of Fujian Province. In 1624, the Governor of Fujian Nan Ju-yi 南居益 dispatched a fleet which successfully attacked the VOC fort at Fengguiwei. The Dutch needed an intermediary to manage negotiations between themselves and the Fujian authorities. A Fujianese, Li Dan 李旦 (d. 1625), a merchant described in Chinese sources as a pirate 海盜 (*haidao*), would fulfil this role.⁶¹ Li and the VOC probably used Portuguese as a *lingua media*. Thanks to Li’s negotiations, the VOC agreed to withdraw beyond Ming jurisdiction to Taiwan. In August, it destroyed its fort and left the Penghu Islands. During their colonial period in Taiwan, the Dutch continued to use Portuguese to communicate with Chinese interpreters.⁶² This use of Portuguese was a linguistic outcome of contact between Dutch and Formosans.

Apart from Portuguese, Low Malay functioned as an LWC in East Asia.⁶³ In a report from another VOC expedition to Taiwan in February 1624, the authors observed that the Siraya used Malay words. They may have heard Siraya words that resembled Malay words. For example, they recorded *api* [IPA: api] as “fire” in Malay, whilst the Siraya normalised form is *apuy*.⁶⁴ This resemblance is because the Malay and Formosan languages, including Siraya, belong to the Austronesian language family. These details indicate that the authors knew some Malay.⁶⁵ There

is no direct reference, however, to the use of Malay as a medium for communication in Taiwan. Nevertheless, because it was used extensively in East Asia, some Dutch knew Malay. This possibility cannot, therefore, be ruled out.

The main Iberian neighbour of Portuguese, Castilian Spanish, was also used in acts of diplomacy. When the VOC became aware of Spanish moves to downsize operations in Taiwan, it prepared to take the Spanish colony, preferably by negotiation but, if necessary, by force. In August 1641, a VOC fleet sailed to northern Taiwan with a letter written in Dutch, signed by the VOC Governor, Paulus Traudenius. It was addressed “To the Spanish governor of the castle Santísima Trinidad” and dated 24 August 1641. *Santísima Trinidad* or “Most Holy Trinity” was the name that the Dutch gave to the main Spanish fort on Heping Island 和平島 close to Jilong 基隆.⁶⁶ On 6 September 1641, the Spanish Governor Gonzalo Portillo (in office 1640–1642) replied by letter in Spanish. The Dutch translated this into their language.⁶⁷ In it, Portillo flatly refused to surrender, writing that he had seen action in Flanders in the Eighty Years’ War, and so was not cowed by this latest show of Dutch military might.⁶⁸ Given that both men could probably have written their letters in Latin, using their own languages can be understood as “acts of identity”.⁶⁹

In 1642, the VOC returned with a larger fleet to capture the Spanish colony by force. The VOC ships arrived on 19 August. After capturing a redoubt, VOC forces advanced on the main Spanish fort. Letters were exchanged between Portillo and the commander of the Dutch fleet, Hendrick Harousse. On 25 August, the VOC commander, Pieter Baeck, personally delivered a letter written in Dutch to Portillo and explained the letter’s contents to him in Spanish.⁷⁰ The Spanish surrendered on 26 August 1642.

A Dutch version of the treaty concluded between the VOC and the Spanish survives. The introduction indicates that Harousse represented the States-General and the Prince of Orange, Frederik Hendrik (r. 1625–1647), who was the military leader of the Dutch Republic, whilst Portillo represented the Spanish king, Philip IV. This is an example of the VOC engaging in diplomatic acts with a polity and using “legal-rational authority” to return to Max Weber’s formulation.⁷¹ Some Spaniards, including Portillo, were taken to Batavia. Portillo was given a passport, written in Dutch, to join the return fleet to the Dutch Republic and to travel from there to Spain. This was signed by the Governor-General, Antonio van Diemen.⁷²

Sinitic varieties, too, played an important role in the VOC’s diplomatic acts. In 1654, the Cantonese translator Tinquá handed over a letter written in Chinese by the Portuguese in Macau, addressed to the Qing Shunzhi Emperor 順治帝 (r. 1643/4–1661). It contained a calumny of the Dutch and was an attempt to prevent the VOC gaining a trade foothold in China. It was translated into Dutch, probably with Tinquá’s assistance. In 1653, Tinquá had gone to Guangdong 廣東 Province (Canton) to act as interpreter for a VOC trade delegation. In the same year, letters were exchanged between VOC representatives, Zacharias Wagenaer and Frederik Schedel, and the Governor of Guangdong. Dutch versions of this correspondence survive. However, it is not clear whether these were translated directly between Chinese (*wenyanwen*) and Dutch or via Portuguese.⁷³ In 1655, the Dutch received

a letter informing them that Chinese authorities had provided water and wood to a VOC ship that had made land in China. The letter was translated into Dutch, although not literally. For example, it references the Qing Emperor as “*den coninc der Tartaren*” [the king of the Tartars].⁷⁴

The VOC needed to communicate with Chinese merchants on a regular basis. It typically received letters in Chinese, which Chinese translators helped to turn into Dutch. The Chinese person with whom the VOC in Taiwan would have its most intensive diplomatic exchanges was Koxinga. In August 1656, Sausinja, a Chinese man working for Koxinga, visited the Dutch at Zeelandia. The text that he brought from Koxinga was translated from Chinese into Portuguese by three Chinese leasehold farmers, Pincqua, Zako, and Juko. Their Portuguese translation was then translated into Dutch, and so Portuguese functioned once more as a *lingua media*, in this case in written communication.⁷⁵ Other letters received from Koxinga were translated from Chinese into Dutch by Pincqua (Hokkien name Ho T'ing-pin 何廷斌) from Xiamen, who was not merely a farmer but also worked as a translator and interpreter for the VOC.⁷⁶ He eventually swapped sides, giving vital information to Koxinga to assist him in his attack on Zeelandia. This highlights the problems and dangers of employing local interpreters. Pincqua was not the first interpreter to swap sides. Early in the Dutch colonial period, the VOC employed the *mestizo* Salvador Diaz from Macau as an interpreter. He fled to Macau with valuable information for the Portuguese about the VOC in Taiwan.⁷⁷

Further letters were exchanged during Koxinga's attack on and siege of Fort Zeelandia. In June 1661, Dutch soldiers found letters written in Classical Chinese on sticks outside their fort. The letters had Koxinga's seal on them, but no salutation (*opschrift*). As a sign of resistance, the Dutch decided not to read the letters. Rather, they fixed them on a stick outside the fort together with an unsealed open letter which read: “We do not accept letters without a decent salutation and not provided with a version in our language. In our Fort Zeelandia 24 June 1661”.⁷⁸

Shortly after this, a black man, probably a slave, freed slave, or indentured labourer working for the Chinese, came outside and shouted in Low Portuguese that the Dutch should send someone into the town next to Fort Zeelandia to translate the letter. The Dutch replied that the Chinese should go to nearby Saccam, the second VOC base in southwest Taiwan, to find a Dutch person there to translate the letter. The black man replied in Portuguese that this was a good idea, and he departed.⁷⁹ Portuguese played a role in a similar action in July 1661. Again, the Dutch stuck a letter on a pole outside Fort Zeelandia. A Chinese man then appeared and removed the letter. He shouted out in Portuguese asking if the Dutch had anything to add. They replied “no”.⁸⁰

In the final days of the siege, there was an intensive exchange of letters between the VOC and Koxinga. VOC representatives wrote letters in Dutch. In a letter dated 27 January, the Governor, Frederik Coyett, wrote that if Koxinga wanted to make a treaty, he should dispatch a letter in Dutch.⁸¹ Koxinga replied on the following day with a letter in Chinese. This was translated into Dutch. One of Koxinga's Dutch captives was a surveyor, Philip Daniëlsz. Mey or Meyn. Unlike many other Dutchmen, Koxinga had spared his life, probably because he found

him useful.⁸² Attached to the letter in Chinese was a letter in Dutch written by Mey. This stated that he wrote it to ensure that the Dutch in Zeelandia understood Koxinga's demands. The letter gave Koxinga a Dutch version of his full honourific title.⁸³ Coyett replied to Koxinga the following day (28 January) in Dutch, setting out his terms for peace. Despite having the services of a Dutchman, Koxinga replied in Chinese, and this letter was again translated into Dutch. Several further similar exchanges occurred.⁸⁴ The use of Dutch by the VOC and Chinese by Koxinga, when each side probably had speakers of each other's language at their disposal, could be interpreted as a way of each asserting its identity and authority, unwilling to use the other side's language, which could be viewed as a sign of submission. This illustrates the deliberate choice made in the use of language, and how language could be a symbolic weapon in diplomatic acts. The VOC's use of Dutch could moreover be understood as a linguistic act of resistance.

The final treaty was concluded on 1 February 1662. The VOC's version of the treaty, written in Dutch, was agreed by the Council of Dutch Taiwan. It consisted of eighteen points. After finalising the treaty, the VOC raised the white flag, a non-verbal means of communicating surrender. In the evening, it received Koxinga's treaty, written in Chinese, which the Dutch had translated into their own language. This consisted of sixteen points.⁸⁵ The original Chinese text did not survive. It may have been destroyed by Qing forces when they captured Taiwan from the Zheng regime in 1683.

The *Landdag*, Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication with the Indigenous Population

But how did VOC leaders and employees communicate with the indigenous Formosan population? The analysis of language practices in the diplomatic sphere provides a way into thinking about the various political and sociocultural contexts in which the VOC operated in Taiwan. Whereas much of the VOC's diplomatic communication with other actors was by letter, with Formosan tribes or ethnolinguistic groups it was predominantly oral. This difference in cultural practice reflects the fact that before the VOC arrived, Formosan societies had oral cultures.⁸⁶ Another perspective, however, is that the Dutch held the eloquence of Siraya leaders in great esteem. Georgius Candidius expressed surprise at their eloquence, comparing them favourably with the famed Athenian statesman and orator, Demosthenes.⁸⁷

When the VOC finally defeated Mattau in 1635, Robertus Junius, who had been intimately involved in the planning and execution of the revenge expedition, offered terms to the Mattau headmen "in their own language", a dialect of Siraya. They went away and discussed these with their fellow villagers. They soon returned, signalling their agreement. Some days later, the headmen appeared before the Council of Dutch Taiwan in Zeelandia and presented several betel nut and young coconut trees planted in pots of their own soil. The Dutch took this to mean that the Mattauers were dedicating their land and its fruits to the "High and Mighty" (*Hoogmogende*) Gentlemen of the States-General.⁸⁸

In 1636, Junius wrote a report of his activities in which he added further details. On 18 December 1635, the articles had been read out to representatives of Mattau, named Tavouris, Foncksui, Tidaros, and Luluch, and other villages in Dutch, Chinese, and “the Sinckan language”.⁸⁹ The Mattauers were asked whether they understood the article which stated that the VOC now had sovereignty over them. Tavouris replied, “Yes, [we do [understand]]”.⁹⁰ The Dutch version of this treaty survives, although the Chinese and Sinckan versions have not subsequently been identified.⁹¹ From the evidence available, the Mattauers did not read or sign the treaty. Rather, they listened to it being read out, discussed it, and indicated their agreement orally and by symbolic gifts. This in some sense represents a *via media* between purely oral diplomacy and the written diplomacy in which the VOC engaged with state and quasi-state actors.

On 11 April 1641, the VOC held the first *Landdag* (then called a *Rijksdag*) in its garden at Saccam. Forty-two chiefs and elders from indigenous villages were present. Twenty-two of these came from six Siraya villages: Sinckan, Tavocan, Bacaluan, Soulang, Mattau, and Tevorang. The other twenty chiefs came from villages in southern Taiwan: Pangsoia, Taccariangh, Sorriau, Netne, Vorrevorongh, Pandandel, Tapouliangh, and Catcha.⁹² From 1644, two *Landdagen* were held regularly, one for Formosan groups to the north of Zeelandia and one for those to the south.⁹³ *Landdagen* for other areas, Danshui in the far north of Taiwan, and Eastern Taiwan, where the VOC exercised less control, took place intermittently.⁹⁴

The *Landdagen* followed a familiar pattern, aimed at emphasising the VOC’s control over the Formosans. Once the Governor had entered the VOC headquarters at Saccam, the indigenous delegates appeared before him one by one, greeting him before proceeding to the garden where they were seated at a long table under the shade of a great white canopy.⁹⁵ There is little evidence of the Governors learning Siraya or other Formosan languages. Joost van Bergen, mentioned above, was deputised as Company interpreter in charge of political affairs. By 1644, the title of Substitute (or Substitute *Politiek*) was bestowed on him.⁹⁶ He is a good example of how a VOC employee could use his knowledge of a Formosan language to enhance his position in the Company and probably his social status in the Dutch colony. For several years at the *Landdag* he stood at the head of the long table and delivered each point that the Governor and Council wanted to make, translating the Governor’s words into the Sinckan dialect, from which they were translated into other Formosan languages.⁹⁷ Van Bergen’s actions can be understood as diplomatic acts in which he spoke vicariously on behalf of the States-General, with a line of command going from him to the Council and Governor of Taiwan, the VOC Directors in Batavia, the Gentlemen XVII of the VOC in the Dutch Republic, and, finally, the States-General. In some sense, these were acts of diplomatic *prosopopoeia*.

After Van Bergen had spoken, the Governor moved on to the most important point: the appointment of the following year’s elders, which further underlined the VOC’s power over the Formosan tribes.⁹⁸ In general, at the northern *Landdag* the “other Formosan languages” were Favorlang, Camachat or Quatongh, and a language spoken in the mountains, referenced as “*de berghspraecke*” [lit. the

mountain language].⁹⁹ Favorlang was spoken by Formosans who lived to the north of the Siraya territory, in an area dissected by the Zhuoshui River 濁水溪. It was probably an earlier form of Babuza belonging to the Western Plains sub-group of Formosan languages.¹⁰⁰ Quatongh may refer to Pazeh or a related language, as the Pazeh were a Formosan group in the former Quatongh region.¹⁰¹ At the southern *Landdag*, three “other Formosan languages” were used: Tapouliangh, Parruan, and Tonghotaval.¹⁰² Tapouliangh was also the name of a village now called Wantan 萬丹 in Pingtung 屏東 County in the far south of Taiwan. At the southern *Landdag* in 1646, the *proponent* Hans Olhoff from Danzig translated the Governor’s words into Tapouliangh, but no details are given of the interpreters, who translated his words into Parruan and Tonghotaval.¹⁰³ Parruan (also Sarruan) and Tonghotaval are both in the south of Taiwan, although we do not know their precise location.¹⁰⁴

VOC records occasionally give details of other languages used at the *Landdagen*. The Zeelandia factory journal for 1655 references a dialect of Favorlang, Takais.¹⁰⁵ At *Landdagen* in 1648 and 1650, the village elder of Outwangh (also called Pangalangh) required the Sinckan language to be translated into Dorcko, Dorcko into Cleyen Tackapoelangs (Little Tackapoelang language), and Cleyen Tackapoelangs into his own language. The same was true for the elder of Nieuwangh. This is interesting as Dorcko is a Siraya village and it has been thought that villagers in Dorcko could understand the dialects of other Siraya villages.¹⁰⁶ Also, in 1648 and 1650, Aloelavaos of Cannalannavo received interpretation in the Sinckan dialect, the Tevorang dialect or language, and Tarrocquan.¹⁰⁷ Again, Tevorang is a Siraya village, albeit one in the mountains. It has been thought that its villagers understood other Siraya dialects.¹⁰⁸ Finally, these details illustrate that the use of languages at the *Landdagen* constituted a complicated chain of translation. Misunderstandings did therefore arise.¹⁰⁹

These and other Formosan languages were used in other contexts that were diplomatic in the sense that they involved political acts between the VOC and other actors, in this case, Formosans. In 1636, a vocabulary of 300 Pangsoia words, which had been collected on a recent visit to the Pangsoia territory, was given to Warnaert Spoelmans, who would go to work there as the first resident, i.e., the Company’s representative permanently based in the area. One can understand this linguistic tool as a diplomatic vocabulary list, i.e., a list of words which would facilitate diplomatic activity. Pangsoia is 放索 (pinyin *Fàng suǒ*, Hokkien *Pàng-soh*) in modern-day Pingtung County. The Pangsoia language may have been related to Siraya.¹¹⁰

Litsyock has been identified with Songshan 松山 in modern-day Taipei City 臺北市. In January 1643, the headman of Litsyock, Penap, arrived at the VOC’s Fort Antonio at the mouth of the Danshui River in northwest Taiwan. The Dutch described Penap as a “king” (*coninck*). This illustrates how they tried to place Formosans within their own existing knowledge grid.¹¹¹ He was accompanied by a Formosan interpreter, Waddij, from Senar near Danshui. Penap and Waddij probably spoke a dialect of Basay, an East Formosan language related to Siraya.¹¹²

E.M. de Carvalho writes that “diplomatic language does not only involve verbal manifestations, but also a series of non-verbal signs used by diplomats and

government representatives to communicate and convey messages to their respective foreign interlocutors".¹¹³ Occasionally, when communicating with Formosans, VOC employees had to resort to non-verbal signs such as gestures and gift-giving. For example, in 1639 the VOC attempted to find gold in Linauw in south-east Taiwan.¹¹⁴ Because no Chinese had penetrated this area, there was no Chinese interpreter to mediate between the VOC employees and Linauwers. The leader of the VOC expedition, Maerten Wesselingh, therefore communicated with them using gestures.

Giving gifts to other diplomatic actors was not merely an expression of politeness, but formed an intrinsic element in VOC diplomatic policy.¹¹⁵ The second Governor, Frederick de Witt, observed, somewhat condescendingly, that the Siraya were easy to please with a pipe of tobacco.¹¹⁶ In 1630, Governor Putmans wrote to the Governor-General, Jacques Specx, referencing quantities of *massichauw*, a strong alcoholic drink made by the Siraya, which the Dutch planned to give as a present to the inhabitants of Sinckan, as well as "grand feasts".¹¹⁷ Such gifts in some sense obviate the problems associated with translation or mistranslation and could be seen as the use of soft power or, rather, blatant bribery.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to analyse which languages VOC representatives used to engage with other actors during its colonial period in Taiwan, how they did this, and with what outcomes. The picture that has emerged is that even though the VOC was in Taiwan for only thirty-eight years, it had to engage with various actors in the diplomatic sphere, which necessitated the use of many languages in various written and oral modes of communication, with different outcomes, some successful, such as the capture of the Spanish colony, but some less so, such as the surrender of its colony to Koxinga.

VOC representatives needed to interact with speakers of Formosan languages, especially Siraya, Spanish, and Sinitic varieties. To deal with the multilingual environment in Taiwan, the VOC adopted several strategies. Initially, Governor Sonck advocated learning Chinese and Siraya. Only a few VOC employees did this. Another strategy was to introduce the Sinckan dialect of Siraya as an LWC in the south, but this failed. In the 1640s, as the VOC became aware of the large number of Formosan languages, it took a leaf out of the Portuguese book and began to promote the use of Dutch. Throughout its colonial period in Taiwan, however, the VOC needed to employ interpreters from several ethnic groups. In dealing with Chinese interpreters, Portuguese often functioned as a *lingua media* between Dutch and Chinese. However, the cases of Pincqua and Salvador Diaz illustrate the risks involved in employing interpreters. In some cases, no intermediary language was required, but in other cases the VOC's message had to go through three or four languages to reach the other actor, as in the communication of the Governor's message to the elders of Outwangh and Nieuwangh at *Landdagen*. Sometimes, when verbal language could not be used, non-verbal language, such as gesture and

symbolism, was employed. The Mattauers' presentation of trees planted in pots of their own soil was replete with symbolism and may have replaced signatures to the treaty with the VOC which, in comparison, seem rather mundane.

The chapter has also analysed the different modes of interaction that the VOC employed to perform diplomatic acts with these other actors. It used letters to communicate with Koxinga, Governors of Chinese Provinces, and the Spanish Governor, and concluded treaties with Koxinga, the Spanish Governor, and Mattau. The text of the last example was written but communicated orally. In other cases, the VOC used interpreters as linguistic intermediaries. The *Landdagen*, which were the main diplomatic tool that the VOC used to communicate with Formosan headmen, are a good example of the improvisation needed in this sociocultural environment.

This contribution has therefore offered a fresh way into thinking about the political and sociocultural environment in which the VOC operated in Taiwan and added to our understanding of the type of actors with whom it engaged, how it communicated with these actors, and with what results. It has illustrated the complexity of its diplomatic and commercial relationships and the challenges that it encountered in constructing and defending its colony. The sources do not, however, allow me to answer every question on this theme. For example, they do not record the identity of some of the interpreters who translated the Governor's message from one Formosan language to another at the *Landdagen*. This is possibly because the only surviving sources were written by VOC employees and not by indigenous people.

Placing this analysis in a broader context, it may be instructive to draw comparisons with diplomatic acts in Europe such as those of the Dutch Republic. It typically engaged with state actors represented by experienced statesmen and diplomats. As it emerged during the Eighty Years' War, the Republic was still trying to find its way in international diplomacy. It sought to build diplomatic relations with other state actors such as its fellow republic, Venice, and fellow Protestant state, England, by sending diplomatic missions led by statesmen such as Baron François van Aerssen and the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Jacob Cats, accompanied by diplomatic cadets such as the polyglot, Constantijn Huygens.¹¹⁸ As for languages, French was emerging as a diplomatic language in Europe. It was used in negotiations at Westphalia along with other languages, and the Peace of Münster was written in French as well as Dutch.¹¹⁹ French has, however, played no role in the story told in this chapter. In dealings with Spanish authorities in Taiwan, only Spanish and Dutch were used. The Governors could probably have used Latin as a common language but chose to correspond in their own languages as an act of identity.

Further research could usefully be done into the language practices in VOC diplomacy elsewhere in its politico-commercial empire such as the Indonesian archipelago and Ceylon. Such research would, I hope, also contribute to our understanding of the complex relations and language practices that emerged in the Age of European Expansion.

Notes

- 1 VOC is an abbreviation of *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* [lit. United East India Company].
- 2 Carvalho, "Diplomatic Discourse", 37.
- 3 Richards, *Understanding the Global Economy*, 344.
- 4 Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History", 5.
- 5 On the VOC in Japan, see Clulow, "Commemorating Failure" and *The Company and the Shogun*. On the English East India Company in Japan, see Screech, *The Shogun's Silver Telescope*. Much scholarly work has been published on the Jesuits in China including their diplomatic engagement with the courts of the Ming and Qing Emperors. See, for example, Swen, *Jesuit Mission and Submission*.
- 6 "The new diplomatic history [...] is one which aims to respond to social and cultural studies [...], to deal with the processes, rather than the results, of diplomatic activity, paying special attention to the cultural aspects of the same. It does so, moreover, from an international viewpoint and not from national history. In this manner, it reflects a new agenda of historiographic interests": Carrió-Invernizzi, "A New Diplomatic History", 606; Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History", 4.
- 7 Jenco & Tremml-Werner, "Historiography of the Other", 220.
- 8 The term "factory" (Dutch: *factorij*) denotes an *entrepôt*. This derives from the Portuguese feitoria.
- 9 Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis* III, IV; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*.
- 10 The first Dutch ships under the command of Jacob Cornelisz. van Neck (1564–1638) reached the Moluccas in 1599. The Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), who worked as a counsel for the VOC, published *Mare Liberum* [The Free Sea] in 1609 to argue against the Portuguese claim to a monopoly of East Asian trade. Grotius, *Mare Liberum*.
- 11 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 401; Borao, *The Spanish Experience in Taiwan*, 9. The VOC did not have complete control of the Moluccas. For example, the Spanish occupied part of Ternate from 1606 to 1663.
- 12 This name was derived from an ancient tribe in the Low Countries, the *Batavi*.
- 13 Heylen, "Dutch Language Policy", 202; DKZ, I, xii.
- 14 Nye, *Soft power*. For account of Dutch missionary activity in Taiwan, see Joby, *Christian Mission*.
- 15 Hennings & Sowerby, "Introduction: Practices of Diplomacy", 9. See also Van Meersbergen, "The Dutch Merchant-diplomat".
- 16 The charter was granted on 20 March 1602.
- 17 Blust, *The Austronesian Languages*, 750.
- 18 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 36.
- 19 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 66, 72.
- 20 Blussé, *Tribuut aan China*, 52–53; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 116–144.
- 21 Andrade, "Political Spectacle", 67–68.
- 22 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 148. Putmans includes sixteen "hamlets" in this number.
- 23 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 113; Andrade, "Political Spectacle", 69.
- 24 Andrade, "Political Spectacle", 69. Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 266 n. 4, gives the literal meaning of *Landdag* as "land" or "country-day". This is more or less correct, although in compound words such as this, the "*dag*" element, which originally indicated that the event would take place on a given day, denotes a meeting with legal or political power.
- 25 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 116.
- 26 Andrade, "Political Spectacle", 68–69.
- 27 Borao, *The Spanish Experience in Taiwan*, 286.
- 28 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 100.

- 29 Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven*, 357, 455. Quoted in Wills, “The Seventeenth-Century Transformation”, 91. The figures for 1646 were compiled at the *Landdag* for that year. It is impossible to verify these figures independently. The number of villages is based on the number of leaders at the *Landdag*. We do not know how such a precise number for the indigenous population was arrived at. It should be treated with some scepticism for the indigenous leaders and the Dutch in Taiwan would both have had reasons to exaggerate the numbers. The figures for 1650 were “according to the latest reports” (*na de jongste advisen*). Both sets of figures were recorded in *Generale Missiven*, which were extensive reports written in Batavia to the VOC leaders in the Dutch Republic. Peter Kang analyses inconsistencies in the Dutch identification of “villages” and argues that what the VOC identified as villages may not have been separate settlements. This would have implications for the accuracy of the number of villages that the VOC recorded. Kang, “A Brief Note”, 114–115.
- 30 Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 86.
- 31 Blussé, *Tribuut aan China*, 58–59.
- 32 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 210.
- 33 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 2.
- 34 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 240.
- 35 For a recent study of the dragomans, see Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*. For a history of translation in the Low Countries, which includes references to interpreters translating into and out of Dutch in the seventeenth century, see Schoenaers et al., *Vertalen in de Nederlanden*, esp. Ch. 2.
- 36 By language tradition, I mean the language practices that emerge and are handed down from one group to another within the same cultural system, in this case a commercial organisation, the VOC.
- 37 Maier & Van der Putten, “Van tolken, papegaaien en predikanten”, 104.
- 38 DKZ, III, 304, n. 7. The fact that Van Bergen came from Danzig may indicate that his first language was German. However, there was a Dutch commercial and migrant community in Danzig, so he may have spoken Dutch as a first language.
- 39 DKZ, IV, 147.
- 40 Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 200–201.
- 41 Few Dutch knew Chinese. One exception was sergeant Pieter Jansz. By 1655, he could speak good Chinese, i.e., probably Hokkien. DKZ, III, 467.
- 42 Ripon, *Voyages et aventures*, 108.
- 43 In *TFE*, I, 30–31, this is rendered as *Hung Yü-yu*, although in pinyin the surname would be *Hong*.
- 44 *TFE*, I, 1.
- 45 *TFE*, I, 36.
- 46 *SIT*, III, 744. MS. Nationaal Archief (NA), The Hague. VOC (1.04.02), 1146, fol. 504v. Volume III of *SIT* has been published for private distribution. We are not told what the Filipino’s first language was. However, like Formosan languages, Ilocano and other languages spoken in Cagayan and elsewhere in the Philippines belong to the Austronesian language family. This may have facilitated his learning of Formosan languages, although he was clearly of limited use as an interpreter.
- 47 DKZ, IV, 181; II, 117; III, 493.
- 48 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 197.
- 49 The VOC tried to introduce Dutch in schools in the Moluccas. However, because of the strong position of Portuguese and Malay, this strategy failed. Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, 37–38.
- 50 Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, 232, 242; Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 199.
- 51 Taking her lead from Gramsci, who did much of the groundwork on hegemony, Urszula Clark asserts: “Linguistic hegemony exerts and legitimates power by presenting the dominant language or variety of a language as an instrument or tool to be used

- by those who acquire it in whatever way they choose" (Clark, "A sense of place", 62). For hegemonic language, see also Sućeska, "Hegemonic Language", and Eriksen, "Linguistic Hegemony and Minority Resistance".
- 52 Burke, *Towards a Social History of Early Modern Dutch*, 14; Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, 236.
- 53 The dominant language at the court of the Princes of Orange was, by contrast, French; it was used extensively by members of the social elite in the Dutch Republic. Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens*, 43.
- 54 The charter does not explicitly state that the VOC should use Dutch in its dealings with other parties, although it was written in Dutch and those who drafted the charter may have considered it unnecessary to define an official language for the VOC.
- 55 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 80–82; DKZ, I, 406.
- 56 By *lingua media*, I mean a language which the interlocutors use to communicate when they do not share a common first language. This is one of the meanings of *lingua franca*. However, in contemporary linguistic literature, *lingua franca* is usually classified as a pidgin that emerges between speakers who do not share a common first language. Operstein, *The Lingua Franca*, 287; Rudwick, *The Ambiguity of English as a Lingua Franca*, 36. To avoid confusion, I therefore use *lingua media* to refer to a language serving the same purpose but not classified as a pidgin.
- 57 Maier & Van der Putten, "Van tolken, papegaaien en predikanten", 102.
- 58 Joby, "Taalcontact tussen het Nederlands en andere talen", 260.
- 59 Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens*, 118. This Portuguese would have been closer to "standard" Portuguese than to Low Portuguese.
- 60 *TFE*, I, 1, 31.
- 61 Li Dan was the head of the Chinese community in Hirado and Nagasaki. He probably learnt Portuguese there. Clulow, "Commemorating Failure", 214.
- 62 Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 43–44, 35, n. 19.
- 63 Maier & Van der Putten, "Van tolken, papegaaien en predikanten", 101–102.
- 64 As Siraya became extinct at some point in the nineteenth century, we cannot be certain how some phonemes were pronounced. Adelaar therefore gives normalised forms. Adelaar, *Siraya*, 302. For an analysis of Malay words in Siraya, see Adelaar, "Malay and Javanese loanwords". *Api* and *apuy* are both reflexes of the proto-Austronesian root, **Sapuy*.
- 65 *TFE*, I, 24.
- 66 Borao, *The Spanish Experience in Taiwan*, 171. The Spanish called this fort *San Salvador*.
- 67 Borao reproduces modern Spanish translations of these letters. These were published by Jose Maria Alvarez. He probably translated them from earlier English translations of the Dutch. *SIT*, I, 325–327. The Spanish translation of Traudenius's Dutch letter, and Portillo's reply in Spanish are probably now lost.
- 68 *SIT*, I, 326–327.
- 69 Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity*, 14–15.
- 70 Baeck came from Antwerp. This may explain his knowledge of Spanish. DKZ, II, 20; *SIT*, II, 381.
- 71 Andrade, "Political Spectacle", 68–69.
- 72 *SIT*, II, 383, 400.
- 73 DKZ, III, 301, 325, 327–329.
- 74 DKZ, III, 568–569.
- 75 DKZ, IV, 96–97. As is often the case, we are not told who made the translation from Portuguese into Dutch.
- 76 DKZ, IV, 185. In pinyin, his name is *He Ting-bin*. He was also known as 何斌 (*He Bin*).
- 77 Jiang, *De missiven van de VOC-gouverneur in Taiwan*, I, 233.

- 78 DKZ, IV, 440–441. Dutch: “Brieven zonder behoorlijk opschrift ende met onse tael daernevens niet versien en neemen wij niet aan. In ons kasteel Zeelandia 24 Junij Anno 1661”.
- 79 DKZ, IV, 441. The Dutch author reports that the black man said in Portuguese “‘*Tyen-Bon*’ ofte *ʔ is goet*”, i.e., “it is good”.
- 80 DKZ, IV, 451.
- 81 Dutch: “soo sende hij (Koxinga) eenen brief in Duytse tale”.
- 82 DKZ, III, 269. Mey left Taiwan for Batavia in February 1662.
- 83 The Dutch version is *Teybing Tsiautoo Teytsiangcoen Coxin*. *Teybing Tsiau* probably equates to *Da Ming Chiau* 大明朝, i.e., the Ming dynasty. *Teytsiangcoen* probably equates to the Hokkien version of his name, *Tīⁿ Sêng-kong* (in the *Pêh-ōe-jī* transcription system). In Mandarin, it is *Zheng Chenggong* (pinyin, *Zhèng Chénggōng*). *Coxin* is a shortened form of *Koxinga*. *Koxinga* is a Dutch rendering of *Kok seng ia*, the Hokkien appellation for Zheng Chenggong. It means “Lord of the Imperial Surname” and was a title given to him by a Ming prince in 1644.
- 84 DKZ, IV, 651–666.
- 85 DKZ, IV, 666–670.
- 86 Dutch missionaries and teachers taught some Formosans, above all the Siraya and the nearby Favorlang, to read and write, but many of the elders and chiefs with whom they had contact probably lacked these skills. In this regard, the Formosan tribes had different forms of leadership. Whilst some had hereditary chiefs, others had councils of elders. The Siraya fell into the latter category.
- 87 TFE, I, 100; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 15.
- 88 TFE, II, 10, 12; Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 45–46.
- 89 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 122. These are the names as they are given in Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis*, III, 95. Campbell (p. 122) gives the names as *Tavouris*, *Tunchuij*, *Tulologh* and *Tidaros*. The reason for this discrepancy is not clear as Campbell often uses Grothe’s Dutch edition as his source text.
- 90 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 122, writes that they replied “*Tavouris*” that is “Yes, we do”. However, that is probably a misunderstanding of the Dutch, “...antwoorden *Tavouris ja*”. As one of the named Mattauers was called *Tavouris*, this probably means “*Tavouris* replied yes” (despite the verb having a plural ending -n). For the Dutch, see Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis*, III, 94.
- 91 TFE, II, 13–14; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 122.
- 92 DKZ, II, 1–3; Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 115.
- 93 Whilst some of the Formosan groups represented had become allies of the VOC, it may be more productive to think of most of these groups as vassals. Tonio Andrade writes in terms of a “lord-vassal” relationship: Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 186.
- 94 Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 113. Chiu (p. 115) provides a comprehensive schedule of the *Landdagen*.
- 95 Andrade, “Political Spectacle”, 69.
- 96 Chiu, *The Colonial ‘Civilizing Process’*, 121.
- 97 The DKZ (e.g., III, 7, 102) occasionally mentions that interpreters (*tolken*) translated from one Formosan language to another but typically provide no further details.
- 98 Andrade, “Political Spectacle”, 68–70.
- 99 DKZ, II, 238. For 1646, see DKZ, II, 468; 1647, DKZ, II, 556; 1648, DKZ, III, 5; 1650, DKZ, III, 101; 1651, DKZ, III, 179; 1654, DKZ, III, 471; 1655, DKZ, III, 471; and 1656, DKZ, IV, 10. In each year, Sinckanese, Favorlang, Camachat, and “*de bergh-spraecke*”, spoken in the mountains to the east of the western coastal plain, were used.
- 100 This includes Taokas, Papora, Hoanya, and Thao. Blust, *The Austronesian languages*, 31, 749–50; Li, “Favorlang”; Joby, *Christian Mission*, 49.

- 101 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 227. Robert Blust classifies Pazeh or Pazih as a Northwest Formosan language, although he recognises that the evidence for such a group is not strong: Blust, *The Austronesian languages*, 750–51.
- 102 Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 199.
- 103 DKZ, II, 149. A *proponent* is a licentiate or student in theology. At the northern *Landdag* in 1646, Olhoff translated the Governor's words into Sinckanese. They were then translated into the other Formosan languages by other interpreters. DKZ, III, 468.
- 104 For 1648, see DKZ, III, 14; 1650, DKZ, III, 108; 1651, DKZ, III, 188; and 1656, DKZ, IV, 22.
- 105 DKZ, III, 474; Joby, *Christian Mission*, 57.
- 106 Gravius, *Het Heylige Evangelium*, 3; Joby, *Christian Mission*, 86.
- 107 DKZ, III, 7, 102.
- 108 Gravius, *Het Heylige Evangelium*, 3; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 112.
- 109 See, for example, DKZ, II, 471. On this page, the author identifies several villages that the VOC had previously named incorrectly.
- 110 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 136; Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis*, III, 116. Andrade identifies Pangsoia as modern-day Linbian 林邊 in Pingtung County: Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, 36 n. 32. This was most probably inhabited by the Makatau people. If so, they may have spoken Makatau, which is a dialect of Siraya. Adelaar, *Siraya*, 3; "Siraya". Pangsoia may, therefore, equate to this dialect. One other suggestion is that there was a Pangsoia-Dolatok dialect. Ferrell, "Aboriginal Peoples of the Southwestern Taiwan Plain", 217–226. Quoted in Adelaar, *Siraya*, 5.
- 111 Jenco & Tremml-Werner, "Historiography of the Other", 220.
- 112 DKZ, II, 117; Blust, *The Austronesian Languages*, 750.
- 113 de Carvalho, "Diplomatic Discourse", 37.
- 114 Peter Kang ("The VOC and the Geopolitics of Southern Formosa", 488) situates Linauw in the Hua-tung Valley 花東縱谷 between Hualien 花蓮 and Taitung 臺東.
- 115 The Dutch word *schenckagie* [gift] appears frequently in the DKZ. The Governor of Dutch Taiwan facilitated trade with Tonkin (now Northern Vietnam) by giving gifts to a prince in Tonkin. DKZ, II, 9. For gift giving by the VOC elsewhere in East Asia, especially in Japan, see Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*. See also Cutler, "Significant Gifts".
- 116 TFE, I, 20, 44.
- 117 Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 102.
- 118 Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens*.
- 119 On the use of languages at peace congresses, see the article by Guido Braun in this volume. For an analysis of contemporary language use in the English East India Company factory at Hirado in Japan, see Kaislaniemi, "The early English East India Company".

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11 The Eloquence of Ottoman Diplomacy

How Ottomans Learned and Used Languages in the Eighteenth Century

Irena Fliter

Eloquence and language skills built the foundations of Ottoman-European diplomatic relations during the early modern period. Mutual understanding was crucial for peace negotiations and border demarcations, as well as for the increasing cultural and social exchanges between the Ottoman and European courts. As Europeans rarely knew Ottoman Turkish, and Ottoman Muslims rarely studied European languages, it was usually non-Muslim Ottoman intermediaries who stepped in and facilitated most communication. These intermediaries translated and interpreted between Ottoman Turkish and various European languages; prior to the eighteenth century, they did so mainly with Italian, and in the eighteenth century, French was increasingly involved.¹ Interestingly, it was not the acquisition of European languages but of eloquence in Ottoman Turkish that challenged both Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. As a bureaucratic language that encompassed Arabic, Persian and Turkish grammar and vocabulary, as well as elements of prose and poetry, Ottoman Turkish required linguistic, cultural and literary eloquence. Based on this understanding of eloquence, which Nir Shafir developed in his article on the Phanariots' linguistic training, the following chapter scrutinises the changing role of language skills in Ottoman diplomacy.²

This chapter examines three social groups of Ottoman subjects—the bureaucrats, the dragomans (interpreters) and the Phanariots—revealing how each group acquired their linguistic expertise. After clarifying the manner in which the multilingual Ottoman Empire then employed the linguistic knowledge of each group, the chapter also traces changes in the Ottoman approach to communication and the employment of representatives. The first group of individuals who would later join the diplomatic ranks consisted of Muslim scribes with a strong knowledge of and eloquence in Ottoman Turkish. The future ambassadors and diplomatic secretaries hailed exclusively from this group of highly trained, knowledgeable bureaucrats. The second group consisted of dragomans who had mastered several European languages in addition to knowing Ottoman Turkish. This was a diverse group of Ottoman subjects from different social, religious and linguistic backgrounds who offered their services to both Ottoman and European delegates. The third group, the Phanariots (elite Greek Ottoman families from Istanbul's Phanar district), were not only eloquent in Ottoman Turkish and European languages and cultures but could also act as political and diplomatic agents on behalf of the Ottoman government. Each group covered some requirements of the diplomatic relations of

the empire; united, they built an efficient and flexible system of communication between Ottomans and Europeans.

Although Ottoman and early modern European historians have produced several studies on symbolic communication and cultural translation in the last two decades, the actual languages of Ottoman diplomacy have not been explored as a separate subject.³ Assumptions that the Ottomans were unwilling or unable to learn foreign languages still prevail, mainly due to the narrow focus on the figure of the individual ambassador.⁴ The role of Istanbul is also pivotal for the study of Ottoman-European exchanges, as many European countries based their permanent embassies there.⁵ Yet, these assumptions are only part of the picture when compared to the practice of early modern Ottoman diplomacy. Drawing on the example of Ottoman-Prussian relations in the eighteenth century, the present chapter shows that, although Istanbul was a centre of diplomacy, it was not the only place where Ottomans engaged in exchanges with foreign diplomats.⁶ Moreover, many Ottoman ambassadors and diplomatic secretaries had some experience with foreign languages or at least showed significant interest in the languages (and cultures) of their hosts prior to their departure to foreign courts. Finally, even though the ambassador was one of the most important diplomatic actors, the functioning of Ottoman communication can only be understood by examining how the various members of the delegations worked together.

The Bureaucrats and the Mastery of Ottoman Turkish

The Ottomans ruled their empire through a strong bureaucratic apparatus run by scribes who, through years of training and socialisation at the sultan's court, learned stylised Ottoman Turkish, which was based on the *elsine-i selase*, the three languages of Arabic, Persian and Turkish.⁷ As head of the chancellery of the Ottoman government (*divan-ı hümayun*), the grand vizier was initially responsible for the empire's foreign relations but at the end of the seventeenth century, the *reisülküttab* (head of the chancery or chief clerk) assumed most of his responsibilities in diplomatic contacts.⁸ The grand vizier and the *reisülküttab* were usually eloquent in Ottoman Turkish but rarely in the diplomatic intricacies of European languages. Hence, by the eighteenth century, the grand dragoman (chief translator) mainly facilitated official communication with foreign envoys and European governments. He held a particularly influential position assisting the *reisülküttab* as an interpreter in negotiations with foreign ambassadors and in translating correspondence to and from the Ottoman government.⁹

Prussia was a relative latecomer in initiating diplomatic contact with the Ottoman Empire. The exchanges between the two courts began in the mid-eighteenth century, a period of intensified diplomatic activity and contact between the Ottoman Empire and Europe. After the upheaval of the Seven Years War (1754–1763) and the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, both governments began to view each other as possible allies against their mutual foes, the Habsburg and the Russian empires. The novelty of their relations was clear in many misunderstandings and miscommunications during the initial diplomatic exchanges. In contrast,

the Venetian Republic, France and England had codified their relations with the Ottoman Empire by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by negotiating *ahdname* statutes (capitulation agreements), which initially merely regulated the status of foreigners in Ottoman territories.¹⁰ Later, other European states, including Prussia in 1761, followed their example and concluded these unilateral agreements and established official diplomatic and economic relations with the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ Despite these long-standing contacts, communication between the Ottoman and European courts remained challenging due to the lack of a shared language and of individuals who could act as interpreters. From the reign of Süleyman I (1494–1566) onwards, Ottoman Turkish had become the *lingua franca* of Ottoman bureaucracy and diplomacy, replacing Persian, Italian and other languages.¹² The Ottomans began accepting only those agreements and treaties that had been written in or translated into Ottoman Turkish, and all ad-hoc ambassadors sent abroad used Ottoman Turkish to communicate with the government in Istanbul and with the hosting governments (through intermediaries). While fulfilling administrative and ceremonial functions, Ottoman Turkish also reinforced Ottoman identity both externally and internally.¹³

The proficiency of the scribes in Ottoman Turkish and their active participation in the literary production of the empire were the foundation for being considered for a diplomatic mission abroad. For instance, all three eighteenth-century Ottoman ambassadors to Prussia—Ahmed Resmi Efendi (1694/95–1783) in 1763/1764, Ahmed Azmi Efendi (c.1740–1821) in 1791/1792 and finally Ali Aziz Efendi (1748/49–1798) in 1797/1798—came from the scribal elite and had followed similar career paths. Born in Crete, which had come under Ottoman rule in 1699, all three ambassadors had acquired some knowledge of Italian or Greek and experienced life in a multiethnic and multicultural border region. After moving to Istanbul for further education, each quickly rose through the ranks to the upper bureaucracy. Ahmed Resmi and Ali Aziz even joined literary circles and composed several treatises of prose, history and biography.

Besides eloquence in the Ottoman language, other factors, such as social networks within the Ottoman elite and experience with European cultures and languages, were also crucial to earn a diplomatic posting. The journeys of Ahmed Azmi to Vienna in 1755 and Berlin in 1763, as part of the retinue of his uncle, Ahmed Resmi, suggest that this form of diplomatic apprenticeship became increasingly important for the linguistic and cultural training of future Ottoman delegates.¹⁴ Another example is that of Mehmed Said Efendi (d. 1761), who had joined his father, Mehmed Yirmisekiz Çelebi Efendi (c. 1670–1732), on his embassy to Paris in 1821 and returned to the French capital as an ambassador in his own right twenty years later. He is said to have learned French and enjoyed the cultural events that Paris had to offer.¹⁵ Both Mehmed Said and Ahmed Azmi are known to have acquired some proficiency in the language of their host country.¹⁶

Eloquence played a crucial role in the ambassadors' communication with the government in Istanbul. For instance, the instructions, accreditation letters and speeches of all three Ottoman ambassadors to Prussia were always composed in Ottoman Turkish.¹⁷ Moreover, the Ottoman governments usually instructed the

ambassadors to summarise their observations of the country they visited in *sefaretnames* (embassy reports), which followed linguistic and structural conventions as well as earlier examples.¹⁸ The *sefaretnames* were not only informative about the journey from Istanbul to the destination and back but also about the geography, economy, science and, most importantly, the military and the administration, including financial and social institutions.¹⁹ Initially intended for the sultan and a small ruling circle, over time, the reports also became tools of Ottoman diplomatic training. Just as young men from European noble families studied former diplomatic negotiations and read about the achievements of other successful diplomats and statesmen, so too did future Ottoman ambassadors include the examination of *sefaretnames* in their curricula.²⁰

Proficiency in Ottoman Turkish and access to social and kinship networks were essential for both the ambassadors and the secretaries. As in the case of their European counterparts, Ottoman secretaries primarily fulfilled representative and administrative functions such as corresponding with the Ottoman officials, taking notes and supporting the ambassador in his administrative tasks.²¹ Along with the intensified diplomatic contacts between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the eighteenth century, the linguistic skills of the secretaries began gaining more significance.²² However, as there is very little historical information on Ottoman secretaries' language skills in general and those in Prussia in particular, this chapter resorts to better-known cases from other European courts. For instance, Nahifi Mehmet Efendi (d. 1788) had worked in the secretariat of the grand vizier before being appointed to the embassy of Abdülkerim Paşa to the Russian Empire in 1775–1776.²³ He seems to be one of the first secretaries to assume a task that was typically the responsibility of an Ottoman ambassador by writing a *sefaretname*. More than twenty years later, Hafız Seyyid Abdullah, the secretary of Mustafa Rasih Paşa, the ambassador to Russia (1792–1794), also wrote a *sefaretname*, which suggests that it was not unusual for other members of the embassy to engage in such crucial diplomatic practices.²⁴

A prominent example of the language skills of a diplomatic secretary is Mahmud Raif Efendi (1760/1–1807). His training and appointment provide powerful evidence of the significance of the position of the diplomatic secretary at the beginning of Sultan Selim III's (1761–1808) reform project, the *Nizam-ı Cedid* (the New Order; 1789–1807), which aimed at reforming the Ottoman military, diplomacy and finances. Mahmud Raif had accompanied Yusuf Ağah Efendi (1744–1824) during the first permanent embassy to Britain (1793–1797), where he attended almost all official meetings and receptions.²⁵ He is also believed to be the first Ottoman to write a *sefaretname* in a foreign language, entitled “Journal du voyage de Mahmoud Raif Efendi en Angleterre”, which detailed his experiences in London and was widely read in European diplomatic circles. Although we do not know the exact circumstances in which Mahmud Raif acquired his proficiency in French, the reasons that the report appeared in a foreign language are clear. The *sefaretname*, along with his other works, aimed at circulating *Nizam-ı Cedid* among the European diplomatic and political circles. A year after he returned from London, Mahmud Raif continued to employ his language proficiency in support of

the reform programme by writing a treaty titled “Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’Empire Ottoman”.²⁶ His case suggests that, while the eloquence of secretaries in Ottoman Turkish continued to be crucial, foreign language skills were in higher demand towards the end of the eighteenth century.

While sending a secretary to assist the ambassador was a longstanding diplomatic practice, the post of *chargé d'affaires* (*maslahatgüzar*) was a novelty in Ottoman diplomacy. Selim III originally introduced the rank in 1793 as part of the Nizam-ı Cedid reforms but the first *chargés d'affaires* assumed their posts in Europe only at the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁷ Initially, the sultan experimented with various types of delegates to reduce the expenditures of diplomatic contacts. At first, he appointed a small number of Muslim bureaucrats as *chargés d'affaires* with few changes in their training, career paths and linguistic skills compared to those of the ambassadors or secretaries. The first Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* to Prussia, Mehmed Esad Bey (d. 1804), came from a prominent family and had already joined the lower bureaucratic ranks. His father had been a *paşa*, a high-ranking member of the Ottoman ruling elite, a position which probably secured his son’s appointment to Prussia in 1800. Mehmed Esad arrived in Berlin with the assignment of improving diplomatic and economic cooperation between the two courts.²⁸ Since he was not an ambassador and had only one French-speaking dragoman (who apparently was ultimately not very competent) in his small retinue, his reception at the Prussian court was cold, and his economic initiatives remained fruitless. Consequently, Selim III did not appoint another Muslim bureaucrat to Prussia and sent Christian Phanariots instead. Their lower diplomatic rank and ability to communicate directly with their hosts eased the formal burden and accelerated the diplomatic contacts. How these and other non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire acquired eloquence and joined the diplomatic circles is the focus of the following pages.

The Dragomans and Linguistic Diversity

The bulk of diplomatic communication in the Ottoman Empire was conducted by a socially, culturally and religiously diverse group called dragomans (from the Arabic *tarjuman*), whose main task was to translate and negotiate between Ottomans and foreigners.²⁹ As Ottoman and European officials had no common language, they depended almost exclusively on these non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. The social progression of dragomans could range from serving as consular interpreters for foreign merchants in port cities to becoming the chief dragoman at a European embassy in Istanbul. Those who rose to the offices of the grand dragoman of the Sublime Porte and the grand dragoman were distinct from the dragomans attached to the foreign embassies and belonged to another, sometimes overlapping social and legal group which is discussed below. The dragomans addressed in this section were legally Christian or Jewish subjects of the Ottoman Empire who had applied (and paid) for a *berat* (deed of protection) from the Ottoman government to be able to work at foreign embassies and consulates.³⁰

The origins of the office of the dragoman can be traced to the *Bailo* (the Venetian representative in Istanbul), who began employing members of the Catholic community in Istanbul—along with a small number of Venetians—as interpreters and translators in the sixteenth century.³¹ Initially, these Catholic families taught their sons several foreign languages at home before sending them to join the ranks of apprentices in the *Bailo*'s household, where they continued their education and learned Ottoman Turkish. Following the Venetian example, other European states that had also established closer diplomatic and economic relations with the Ottomans adopted the system of employing locals as intermediaries. Within several generations, a “unified and socially mobile group” based on a number of local intermarried families serviced almost every embassy and many consulates in the Ottoman Empire.³² A knowledge of foreign languages, along with kinship networks, had become the main qualifications of the dragomans and made them indispensable for Ottoman-European relations.

These diplomatic intermediaries offered a diverse selection of languages and activities. Dragomans had to be well versed in bureaucratic Ottoman Turkish and its literary practices and traditions. Unlike Muslim bureaucrats, however, the dragomans were also eloquent in several European languages, usually Italian and French along with their native Greek.³³ Linguistic expertise often differed from individual to individual, and members of the same family could offer different linguistic proficiencies and, hence, serve in different embassies. In the Ottoman Empire, the dragomans used Italian as the language of administration, commerce and, along with Greek and Turkish, for daily communication; French was increasingly used for diplomatic correspondence with Europeans.³⁴ Their work was less concerned with face-to-face interpretation than with translations of documents and visits by Ottoman officials.³⁵ The dragomans' eloquence qualified them not only for service at the European embassies in the Ottoman Empire but also for sojourns in foreign courts in the retinue of Ottoman delegates. Once they arrived at a foreign court, the dragomans then offered face-to-face interpretation in addition to translations of correspondence, speeches and any other form of communication.

Each of the three Ottoman embassies to Prussia had two dragomans in their retinue; one was proficient in French and the other in German (the two main languages of the eighteenth-century Prussian court and diplomacy), and at least one of the two was also eloquent in Ottoman Turkish. Yet the initial contact between the Ottoman and the Prussian courts was nonetheless difficult, mainly because of the inability to find personnel who knew the language and culture of the other. The practice of sending dragomans to accompany an embassy to a foreign court worked for already well-established diplomatic relations and countries that maintained commercial relations and thus had subjects in direct contact with each other. The Ottoman and Prussian governments, however, had only established diplomatic relations in the mid-eighteenth century, when both needed an ally against the Habsburg and Russian empires. Moreover, there was limited commercial contact between the two countries that could have provided the courts with linguistically proficient individuals, and those dragomans who knew Ottoman Turkish and

German or French usually worked for the Habsburg or French embassies—both opponents of the Ottoman-Prussian approach.

The choice of dragomans for the Ottoman embassies to Berlin reflects the linguistic challenges of the diplomatic contacts between the two courts. Both sides resorted to dragomans who were not from the ranks of the Istanbul Catholic community and who were instead from a more diverse background. For instance, Ahmed Resmi appointed the Ottoman Jewish merchant Abraham Salomon Camondo (d. 1783) as the first dragoman of his embassy to Berlin in 1763.³⁶ Camondo ran a successful company that traded between the Ottoman Empire, the German territories and the Netherlands. These commercial relations and his family background provided him with proficiency in German, and he was thus able to translate Ahmed Resmi's speech at the Prussian court during the official welcoming reception.³⁷ The second dragoman in Ahmed Resmi's retinue was Yannaki Frangopoulou (ca. 1730–1813), an Ottoman Greek who worked as the second dragoman of the Prussian embassy in Istanbul and knew French but no German.³⁸ Ahmed Azmi was accompanied by the dragoman Constantin Karatzas (1735–1811), who was related to Frangopoulou through marriage and had close ties with the rulers of the Danubian Provinces. It was not only Karatzas's kinship networks that had secured him the appointment as an embassy's dragoman but also his exceptional linguistic abilities in Ottoman Turkish, French as well as Modern and Ancient Greek.³⁹ Ahmed Azmi's second dragoman, Christian Ludwig Gross (d. 1812), was a merchant who resided in Istanbul but had been born in Prussia, and German was thus his native language. Ali Aziz, the first permanent ambassador to Prussia, also brought along dragomans proficient in both German and French. According to the report of the Prussian ambassador in Istanbul, the first dragoman, Peter Ichko (1755–1808), had worked as a merchant in Belgrade and knew German from his commercial relations with the Habsburgs. Ali Aziz's second dragoman, Yanko Kopri (dates unknown), was an Ottoman Greek who had worked as a French teacher in Istanbul.⁴⁰

The importance and difficulty of communication between Ottomans and Prussians during diplomatic missions abroad is evident in the hiring of additional interpreters during the missions. Almost every Ottoman delegate in Prussia had to employ local individuals—or at least individuals who had been in the country long enough to have a good knowledge of German—in addition to the official diplomatic dragomans who had come with the embassy from Istanbul. One particularly interesting case is that of a merchant and dragoman named Kriko, whom Ali Aziz took into service in 1797. In a petition to the Prussian foreign ministry from the year 1800, Kriko described his background and path into the service of the Ottoman embassy. He explained that he was a “native Greek from Larissa” in Ottoman Macedonia who was fluent in six languages (including German) with writing skills in several of them.⁴¹ Kriko continued that he had lived in Nuremberg for six years, then in the Habsburg territories, including Hungary and Slovenia, and finally in the Saxon city of Chemnitz, where Ali Aziz had called him to Berlin and appointed him his private interpreter (*Übersetzer*).⁴² However, as the ties between the Ottoman Empire and Prussia grew closer (the two governments had concluded a defensive alliance in 1790), neither side could rely on an eclectic, *ad*

hoc approach to their communication. They required individuals who could fulfil two crucial functions of diplomacy by acting as representatives of the Ottoman government and communicating efficiently and independently with the Prussian and other European courts.

The Phanariots and the Establishment of Diplomatic Eloquence

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Phanariot *chargés d'affaires* became the representatives of the Ottoman Empire at European courts, offering their government both linguistic and diplomatic expertise. The Phanariots had joined the Ottoman government in the seventeenth century, first through the offices of the grand dragoman and the dragoman of the fleet and, starting in 1711, as rulers (*voyvodas*) of the Danubian Principalities, Walachia and Moldavia.⁴³ By holding these crucial offices, the Phanariots not only participated in Ottoman governance but they could also communicate with European diplomats, foreign departments and merchants, either on behalf of the sultan or, sometimes, on their own initiative.⁴⁴ It was in fact their eloquence in Ottoman Turkish and European languages that paved their way to governmental posts. The sons of these elite Ottoman Greek families from Istanbul's Phanar district were frequently educated at the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul or in Italian cities such as Padua.⁴⁵ Others learned European languages at consular schools in Istanbul, where they also made their first connections with European envoys and other diplomatic representatives.⁴⁶ Italian had been the main language of communication between the Ottoman Empire and Europe until the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Its knowledge had earned the Phanariots their initial recruitment in the service of the Ottoman Empire, and it continued to be relevant to some extent for exchanges with Italian-speaking foreigners. Yet, by the time the Phanariots began assuming diplomatic posts in Western European capitals in the early nineteenth century, Italian had lost its relevance for diplomatic discourse and communication; it was replaced by French, the new *lingua franca*.

While access to Greek and other European languages, especially Italian and later French, came through early training by family members, private tutors or other institutions, eloquence in Ottoman Turkish posed a much greater challenge. In an article about the efforts of an eighteenth-century provincial ruler to provide his son with access to Ottoman Turkish, Nir Shafir shows the extent and importance of Ottoman bureaucratic language and culture for the Phanariots' participation in Ottoman governance. As Shafir argues, "linguistic skills in European languages as well as literary Ottoman Turkish were their most important currency for power and success in Ottoman diplomacy".⁴⁸ For the Phanariots, it was not enough to be able to communicate or draft petitions, the task of most diplomatic dragomans; their eloquence in Ottoman Turkish had to equal that of Muslim bureaucrats. They needed in-depth literary expertise and practical experience in addition to Arabic and Persian. However, books for language study, as Johan Strauss argues in his article on the engagement of Greeks with Ottoman Turkish, were rare, and attendance at the Islamic institutions of higher learning was restricted to Muslim students.⁴⁹ Phanariots also struggled to find private teachers (*hoca*), and even if such

a teacher could be found, not everyone managed to achieve eloquence in the language of the Ottoman administration.⁵⁰

Eloquence had guaranteed the Phanariots access to the Ottoman administration throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but by the nineteenth century, it had opened another avenue for ambitious Phanariots. Equipped with proficiency in foreign languages and Ottoman Turkish, and with origins in families that had already been participating in Ottoman governance, the Phanariots now joined the diplomatic ranks representing the empire abroad. Two of these highly qualified Phanariots dispatched to Prussia were Jacques Argyropoulos (1774–1850) and his brother Jean Argyropoulos (d. 1851). Before Jacques Argyropoulos's appointment in 1804 and Jean Argyropoulos's appointment in 1806, Ottoman-Prussian diplomatic relations had been strained by a series of unlucky events. These started when the ambassador, Ali Aziz, and later the *chargé d'affaires*, Mehmed Esad, passed away during the missions. Then, the interim *chargé d'affaires*, Yanko Kopri, experienced financial troubles that almost caused a diplomatic incident between Prussia and the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹ The arrival of the Phanariot *chargés* in the Prussian capital suggests that the Ottoman government had been aware of the strained situation and was eager to repair the relationship with its ally by appointing delegates who could easily communicate with their hosts and with the government in Istanbul.

Jacques and Jean Argyropoulos came from one of the most prominent Phanariot families in the Ottoman Empire. Their father, Emanuel (Manolaki) Argyropoulos (dates unknown), had worked as the representative of the Wallachian *voyvoda* (*kapı kethüdası*) in Istanbul and as a dragoman in the service of the Ottoman government. Another of the Argyropoulos brothers had served in the Ottoman province of Moldova and later represented the Ottomans in negotiations with the Russian Empire.⁵² Following family tradition, Jacques Argyropoulos began his career as the secretary of the Orthodox patriarchate and then acted as the *kapı kethüdası* of the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia. He is said to have been proficient in Turkish, Arabic, Persian and the principal languages of Europe such as French, Italian and Russian.⁵³ Jean Argyropoulos, about whose life and career less is known than for his prominent brother, probably received a similar education. He joined the diplomatic service before Jacques as the dragoman of the Ottoman ambassador to Britain, Ismail Ferruh Efendi (c. 1747–1840), and, after the ambassador's departure in 1800, as a *chargé d'affaires* of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ After his mission to Prussia, he continued as the Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* in Vienna. Yet, the Argyropoulos family's success came to an end in 1815, when the brothers fell out of the sultan's favour.⁵⁵

Jacques Argyropoulos must also have been a gifted translator from an early age. For instance, as the Prussian ambassador in Istanbul reported, the young Phanariot had worked as a translator in the newspaper department, which the grand vizier, Seyyid Mehmed Paşa, had established to keep Abdülhamid I (1774–1789) and the rest of the government informed of political and military developments in Europe.⁵⁶ After his mission to Prussia, Jacques Argyropoulos rose to the position of dragoman of the fleet, and in 1812, he reached the most prestigious post of a Phanariot

career by becoming the grand dragoman.⁵⁷ Alongside his political career, Jacques Argyropoulos continued his literary activities, producing several translations from and to Ottoman Turkish. For instance, he translated a French work on the history of Catherine II (1729–1796) by Jean-Henri Castéra (1749–1838) entitled *Histoire de Catherine II, impératrice de Russie*, into Ottoman Turkish. Unlike his brother, Jean Argyropoulos is not known to have produced any works in translation; he mainly focused on diplomatic work. His close friend, the Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), attested to his linguistic abilities, recounting in his memoirs that, during their frequent social gatherings, Jean Argyropoulos conversed in both French and English.⁵⁸

The ascendancy of the Phanariots to diplomatic posts abroad also ushered in a new, although short-lived, era of Ottoman diplomacy. One change was in the form of communications. Since many diplomatic dispatches were intercepted and read by other governments, chiefly among the Habsburgs, most officials and diplomats usually hid their important correspondence by employing different cryptographic mechanisms.⁵⁹ The Prussian and other European governments used numerical encryption but the Ottoman government and its delegates abroad usually conveyed their most confidential information orally.⁶⁰ Sometimes, they also wrote the actual message with invisible ink made of lemon juice between the regular lines of correspondence.⁶¹ To read the concealed message, the recipient or an interceptor had to heat or chemically treat the letter and hence disclose that it had been intercepted.⁶² As these methods of confidential communication became increasingly insufficient, the Ottomans switched from the oral and chemical systems to a numerical code.⁶³ Jacques Argyropoulos became the first Ottoman delegate in Prussia to use a numerical cipher for his correspondence with his government. One of his reports to the Ottoman government suggests that Argyropoulos must have composed his letters in Ottoman Turkish and then ciphered them himself.⁶⁴

Another change in the form and style of Ottoman diplomatic communication was even more significant than the use of numerical cipher. With quick-paced changes in the political, military and diplomatic fields, European states adopted French as the main unifying language of diplomatic communication.⁶⁵ A similar preference for expedience can be observed for the Ottoman Empire. Although the Phanariot *chargés d'affaires* continued to correspond with their government in Ottoman Turkish and with their hosts in French (or in the local language), the previously separate tasks were now united in one person. The Argyropoulos brothers informed the Ottoman centre with more or less regular correspondence about current diplomatic and political events in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe.⁶⁶ This correspondence testifies that the eloquent genre of *sefaretnames* had lost its importance, and information about the events in Europe had to be shared as swiftly as possible. None of the *chargés d'affaires* composed a *sefaretnama*, yet proficiency in Ottoman Turkish remained crucial as the *chargés* sent their reports in Ottoman Turkish to their governments. The eloquence of Ottoman diplomacy seemed to have shifted towards the European languages, chiefly French. Unlike their predecessors, the Phanariots no longer

required dragomans or other intermediaries to join the European diplomatic and social networks and gather information. For instance, in January 1806, the Prussian government asked Jean Argyropoulos for information about the fate of a Prussian cavalry captain who had been sent to the Danubian Principalities. In response, Jean Argyropoulos informed the Department of Foreign Affairs that a temporary interruption of the flow of correspondence to and from Vienna probably caused the silence about the captain's destiny.⁶⁷ However, despite the growing links between the Ottoman and European diplomatic networks, the changes in the forms of communication were cut short by the military and political events that swept over the Ottoman Empire and Europe and eventually led to the recalling of Jean Argyropoulos and the abandonment of Ottoman diplomatic representation in Prussia in 1808.

Conclusion

Ottoman Turkish had been the *lingua franca* of Ottoman diplomacy; it was the language that all Ottoman subjects involved in foreign relations had to master to a certain degree. In addition to knowledge of this highly stylised language of the administration, the government also required its delegates to be eloquent in European languages to communicate with European officials in Istanbul and abroad. Hence, while Ottoman Turkish was used for internal communication, French and Italian, among other European languages, became the languages of external contact. To fulfil the linguistic requirements of its foreign relations, as this chapter has demonstrated, the Ottoman government employed three different groups of Ottoman subjects, each of whom offered unique skills and qualities that were often complementary in enabling Ottoman-European communication.

The importance of communication and the knowledge of foreign languages was reflected in the link between the ambassadors and secretaries, on the one hand, and the dragomans on the other, and their combined efforts facilitated communication with the Ottoman embassies abroad. The appointment of the *chargés d'affaires* at the beginning of the nineteenth century demonstrates the changes that were taking place in the Ottoman approach to diplomatic communication. After the Ottoman government first experimented with a Muslim *chargé*, it soon realised that, in times of internal crisis and external threat, it required direct, immediate and confidential communication and information exchange rather than eloquent oral reports and *sefaretnames*, which were usually delivered at the end of the diplomatic missions. The multilingual Phanariot *chargés d'affaires* linked diplomatic agency with the ability to communicate in Ottoman Turkish and French, the dominant language of diplomacy in Europe. With their ability to comply with or even advance modes of communication, the Phanariots quickly filled most of the Ottoman diplomatic representations abroad. Their unique eloquence in Ottoman Turkish and European languages had propelled them into the diplomatic arena but language proficiency was not enough. Domestic events back in Istanbul destabilised the entire political system and challenged the Phanariots' loyalties, eventually resulting in the closing of all Ottoman diplomatic representations abroad until the 1830s.

Notes

- 1 Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 171–172.
- 2 Shafir, “Phanariot Tongues”, 182–183.
- 3 For instance: Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities*; Reindl-Kiel, “Symbolik, Selbstbild und Beschwichtigungsstrategien”; Windler, “Symbolische Kommunikation und diplomatische Praxis”.
- 4 Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace*; Göçek, *East Encounters West*.
- 5 Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey*; Sowerby & Markiewicz, “Introduction”.
- 6 Do Paço, *L’orient à Vienne au dix-huitième siècle*; Fliter, *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*; Gürkan, *Sultanın Casusları*; Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*.
- 7 On training in Ottoman Turkish see: Darling, “Ottoman Turkish”, 171; Dursteler, “Speaking in Tongues”, 54; Krstić, “Of Translation and Empire”, 131–132; Markiewicz, “Persian Secretaries”, 32.
- 8 Findley, *Legacy of Tradition to Reform*, 336–337.
- 9 Meral, “A Survey of Translation Activity”, 115.
- 10 Vogel, “Istanbul als Drehscheibe frühneuzeitlicher europäischer Diplomatie”; on capitulations, see Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*.
- 11 Fliter, *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 25.
- 12 Woodhead, *Ottoman Languages*, 112; Krstić, “Of Translation and Empire”, 131–132.
- 13 Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 146.
- 14 Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace*, 46; Fliter, *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 22–36.
- 15 Göçek, *East Encounters West*, 80.
- 16 For Mehmed Said see: Göçek, *East Encounters West*, 80; for Ahmed Azmi see: GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10553 (Jarosław, 30 September 1763, Johann Alexander Hevelcke to Department of Foreign Affairs); GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10555 (Breslau, 25 January 1791, Karl Georg Heinrich von Hoym to Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg).
- 17 Usually, the diplomatic dragomans then translated the communications into French or German; cf. GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10562 (Berlin, 28 June 1800: “Traduction substantielle et abrégée de la lettre de créance de SM Sultan Selim trois, qui constitue son chargé d’affaires près la cour de Berlin, Mehemed Essad Bey Effendi, assesseur de la chancellerie impériale ottomane faite à Berlin le 28 juin 1800”).
- 18 Yeşil, “The Transformation of the Ottoman Diplomatic Mind”, 469; on the *sefaretnames* about Prussia see: Nicolai & Resmi Efendi, *Des türkischen Gesandten Resmi Ahmet Efendi*; Azmi, *Sefâretnâme*; Ali Aziz’s report is considered incomplete due to the ambassador’s sudden death in Berlin, and was reprinted and translated into modern Turkish (Schmiede, *Osmanlı ve Prusya kaynaklarına*).
- 19 Klein, “The Sultan’s Envoys Speak”, 89–90.
- 20 Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 347.
- 21 Pohlig, “Formalität und Informalität”, 43–44; Kühnel, “Zur Professionalisierung diplomatischer Verwaltung”, 167.
- 22 For a detailed analysis of the secretaries in the service of Phanariot rulers of the Danubian Provinces see: Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Changing Subjects*.
- 23 On the embassy of Abdülkerim Paşa see: Itzkowitz, *Mubadele*.
- 24 On the embassy of Mustafa Rasih Paşa see: Conermann, “Das Eigene und das Fremde”.
- 25 Yalçinkaya, “Mahmud Raif Efendi”, 410–414.
- 26 It was probably translated from Ottoman Turkish to French by Jacques Argyropoulos, the later *chargé d’affaires* to Prussia (see Strauss, “What Was (Really) Translated in the Ottoman Empire?”, 58).
- 27 Yalçinkaya, “Mahmud Raif Efendi”, 403–404.
- 28 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10715 (Istanbul 13 July 1802, Friedrich von Knobelsdorff to Department of Foreign Affairs).

- 29 On dragomans see for instance: Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*; Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries"; Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans"; Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*.
- 30 Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, 42–43.
- 31 Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries", 115.
- 32 Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans", 781.
- 33 Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans", 778.
- 34 Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues", 57.
- 35 Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans", 783.
- 36 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 96, 71 Q ("Copie d'après la lettre. Liste des choses necessaires, Jhannaki Francopulo").
- 37 Fliter, "Birth, Berat, and Banishment", 458.
- 38 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10553 (Istanbul, 7 June 1763, Karl Adolf von Rexin to Department of Foreign Affairs).
- 39 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10555 (Frankfurt (Oder), 9 February 1791, Heinrich Friedrich von Diez to Department of Foreign Affairs); Minaoglou, "Entertainment Instead of Negotiations", 279; Costache, "Loyalty and Political Legitimacy", 35.
- 40 Fliter, *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 44–46.
- 41 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10561 (Berlin, 12 February 1800, Kriko to Department of Foreign Affairs).
- 42 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10561.
- 43 On the Phanariot ascendancy and participation in Ottoman governance see: Philliou, "Families of Empires and Nations"; Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*.
- 44 Shafir, "Phanariot Tongues", 187.
- 45 Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 10; Costache, "Loyalty and Political Legitimacy", 28–29.
- 46 Shafir, "Phanariot Tongues", 198.
- 47 Minervini, "Lingua Franca", 152; Minervini, "L'italiano", 49–50.
- 48 Shafir, "Phanariot Tongues", 182.
- 49 Strauss, "The Millets and the Ottoman Language", 195.
- 50 Strauss, "The Millets and the Ottoman Language", 195.
- 51 Fliter, *Ottomans in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 116–120.
- 52 Strauss, "The Millets and the Ottoman Language", 196.
- 53 Anonymous, "Jacques Argyropoulos".
- 54 Yalçınkaya, "İsmail Ferruh Efendi'nin Londra büyükelçiliği", 406.
- 55 HHStA, Türkei VI, 2, Istanbul, August 1808; Türkei VI, 9, Vienna, July 1808.
- 56 BOA, HAT, 176.7724, March 1806; Anonymous, "Jacques Argyropoulos"; Davison, "How the Ottoman Government Adjusted to a New Institution", 17.
- 57 Strauss, "Nineteenth-century Ottoman Americana", 261; Strauss, "Türkische Übersetzung zweier europäischer Geschichtswerke", 248.
- 58 Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, 12.
- 59 On the Habsburg interception of correspondence from and to the Ottoman Empire see: Schobesberger, "European Postal Networks", 20–21; GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10674 (Vienna, 6 October 1784, Count Constans Philipp Wilhelm von Jacobi-Klöst to Friedrich II).
- 60 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10556 (Berlin, May 1791, Hertzberg to Christian Ludwig Siebmann).
- 61 Gürkan, *Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean*, 81.
- 62 Ágoston, "Information Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy", 85; Gürkan, "The Efficacy of Ottoman Counter-Intelligence", 21.
- 63 BOA, HAT, 176.7722, March 1807; 1347.52652 E, February 1806.
- 64 BOA, HAT 176.7722, March 1807; 1348.52711, I.
- 65 Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 101.

66 Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 20.

67 GStA PK, HA I, rep. 11, 10552 (Berlin, 10 January 1806, Jean Argyropoulos to Carl August von Hardenberg).

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12 Language and Legitimacy

The Entry of American Diplomats into the Francophone World of Diplomacy, 1775–1800

Jonathan Singerton and Ellen R. Welch

When members of the Continental Congress resolved on 4 July 1776 to establish a “separate and equal station” for the thirteen colonies of mainland North America, they also established the need for diplomatic recognition. In the political transition towards independence, the new United States of America required the consent of other nations to obtain legitimacy for itself and to engage with other nations on the world stage.¹ The leaders of the self-proclaimed United States understood the necessity of these external relations given they fought a war of survival against the preeminent military power of the day, Great Britain. As historian Eliga H. Gould remarks, “the United States could not become the nation that Americans imagined without the consent of other nations and people”, and so uninvited patriots, the so-called “militia diplomats”, attempted to force themselves into European courts in the hope of procuring recognition, military resources, and alliances.² While this irruption of America into European international relations has usually been framed in terms of its political consequences, it also had important ramifications for the culture of European diplomacy in the late eighteenth century. From the European perspective, the founding of the United States and its entry into transatlantic diplomatic relations posed a challenge to the “society of states” as it previously existed.³ Republican emissaries from the new United States did not fit into the hierarchies and ceremonial practices developed for representatives of kings and princes. As representatives of a democracy, they stood in uneasy relation to the aristocratic codes of behaviour that underpinned diplomatic cultural norms in the Old World. In addition, American diplomats, recruited from a variety of regions, professions, and backgrounds, lacked the training and pedigree of their European counterparts.

Among these cultural and social factors, language proved to be among the most significant obstacles to American diplomats attempting to enter the European society of states, indicating the United States’ difference from its diplomatic partners when American envoys served abroad. French, often considered the diplomatic *lingua franca* in this era, prevailed in the conduct of international affairs in European courts. American colonists, including those colonial elites who represented the majority of “militia diplomats” in the early period of American interaction in Europe, often received little formal linguistic training.⁴ As a result, representatives tended to favour English in their interactions with European counterparts in

the earliest years of U.S. diplomacy. As several examples demonstrate, lack of linguistic ability frequently undermined American diplomatic goals in Europe. On the other hand, by privileging English in its diplomatic interactions, especially those conducted on American soil, the United States claimed a linguistic advantage, compelling interlocutors to converse in a less commonly spoken language. American ministers' language practices, in other words, played an ambivalent role in the United States' quest for international legitimacy.

This essay charts the complex role of language choice in the first few decades of the United States' participation in European diplomatic society. In the 1770s, the "American Commissioners" seeking European support for the Revolutionary cause roiled their interlocutors by relying on English in official communications. Deriving at least in part from necessity, this preference for English also posed a challenge to the social and cultural norms of Francophone European diplomacy and raised questions about the relationship between cultural conformity and political recognition in the diplomatic community. In the years following the Revolution, the United States developed a compromise approach in its diplomatic language practices. While preferring to send abroad ambassadors (and secretaries) who could interact in French and other European languages to gain favour and ensure success in negotiations, the young government maintained English as the dominant language in diplomacy conducted on home soil, marking American diplomatic culture as removed from, though no less legitimate than, European diplomatic society. In this way, the history of the linguistic dimension of early American diplomacy reveals a cultural reframing of the European world of diplomacy as a result of the American Revolution beyond mere political restructuring. This story also illustrates how the cultural norms that regulate legitimacy in diplomatic society—including norms around language practices—are not static but rather are in themselves sites for the negotiation of status and recognition.

Background: Language Education and Diplomacy in Early America

In the earliest years of American diplomacy, envoys' linguistic choices were often made out of necessity, reflecting the unevenness of language education in the colonies. Among the American Commissioners representing the interests of the rebel colonies, Silas Deane, who attended Yale, and Eton-educated Arthur Lee would have received a conservative, neo-classical schooling in Latin and Greek rather than in "living" tongues.⁵ However, the opportunities for young Americans to learn modern languages expanded significantly in the late eighteenth century. Although the oldest institutions of higher learning in the American colonies emphasised the classical tradition, modern languages, especially French, did have their place. Harvard offered "semi-official" instruction in French as early as the 1720s, hiring its first salaried French tutor in 1787.⁶ By the 1770s, study of modern languages became more ubiquitous as educational reformers such as Noah Webster and Benjamin Rush called for curricula that focused on modern approaches and subject matter with practical applications.⁷ Newer colleges in colonial America such as the College of New Jersey,

Brown University, and Liberty Hall Academy designed their courses of study based on "Enlightenment ideals of a universal education consisting primarily of languages, philosophy, the arts and sciences".⁸ The faculties of these institutions along with those of the College of William and Mary and King's College included teachers of modern languages such as German, Spanish, and Italian as well as French.⁹ Beyond formal establishments, education in modern languages also occurred in private homes. Young women of the colonies' elite families, for example, also tended to study French as part of their education in civility, following British practices for girls' private tuition.¹⁰ The quality of instruction may have varied greatly in both domestic and institutional settings, given the relative scarcity of native speakers available to serve as tutors in America as compared to on the Continent or in Britain. Still, the opportunity to study and master modern languages including French was available to elite young Americans by the end of the eighteenth century. The question remained as to whether language training was seen as desirable and important for those who might pursue a diplomatic career.

Certainly, American elites understood the importance of language for conducting diplomacy. During the War of American Independence, elected officials in the Continental Congress appointed members of diplomatic missions. In some cases, congressional representatives selected envoys based upon their linguistic abilities, with one such example being the 1776 mission to Quebec.¹¹ In the early stages of the American Revolution, American patriots wished to unite other colonies beyond the thirteen mainland states against Great Britain. A mission led by Benjamin Franklin, with Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll, set off in the spring of 1776 to convince the Catholic Quebecois to join with the thirteen rebellious colonies to the south. Franklin was the most experienced diplomat as he had earlier represented colonial interests in Britain, while the inclusion of Chase and Carroll demonstrated that Protestants and Catholics could live harmoniously within one political entity. Importantly, all three had some command of French, which was known to congressional members.

In praising the selection of Franklin as a member of the Quebec mission, John Adams—then a member of the Continental Congress—wrote: "[Franklin's] masterly Acquaintance with the French Language, his extensive Correspondence in France, his great Experience in Life, his Wisdom, Prudence, Caution: his engaging Address: united to his unshaken Firmness in the present American system of Politicks and War, point him out as the fittest Character, for this momentous Undertaking".¹² Adams's words reflected the value placed on two characteristics of early American diplomats: fluency in French and notability. These elements were not enough to convince the Quebecois who mistrusted their southern neighbours and generally thought their quest against British rule was foolish. The mission to Quebec failed, though not, in this case, because of linguistic ability but because of deeply entrenched political calculations by the Quebecois.¹³ The selection of the mission's participants, however, demonstrates that linguistic abilities were an early consideration among congressional members in creating at least some American diplomatic ventures.

Revolutionary Diplomacy: Challenges to Language Practices

Consideration of linguistic ability also undoubtedly played a role, though an ambiguous one, when American militia diplomacy attempted to enter the European court system. As noted earlier, those entrusted to carry out the United States' diplomatic work in the years immediately following their declaration of independence had not uniformly enjoyed access to formal education in modern languages. Uneven linguistic abilities influenced the conduct and the success of American diplomatic missions and posed an implicit challenge to conventional language practices in European diplomatic society.

This challenge was signalled with the earliest American missions on the European mainland. Among the American Commissioners who negotiated for support for the Revolutionary cause in France, Silas Deane and Arthur Lee lacked modern language skills almost entirely. Most of the mission's secretaries also had deficient French, as, for example, Jonathan L. Austin, whose case will be discussed below. Faced with a lack of linguistic fluency, the assembly of the Commissioners and their staff relied upon hired translators for processing missives and facilitating meetings. Only Benjamin Franklin possessed any degree of proficiency in European languages. According to his own claims, he could write tolerably in German and Italian, as well as French.¹⁴ In part for this competency, when he arrived in Paris in 1777 as the chief representative of the United States, he, again, became the prime operative in building ties with European courts. Yet, even Franklin's fluency has been debated, due in part to the fact that the Commissioners' official business was carried out almost exclusively in English, a possible indication of their collectively weak linguistic skills. The Spanish ambassador the conde de Aranda reported in his dispatches that all the Americans' French was insufficient for clear discussion, although he also admitted that "some reserve on [their] part" may have been another factor in their refusal to converse in French.¹⁵ Whether motivated by necessity or strategy, the Commissioners' reliance on English marked them as outsiders on the European diplomatic scene.

In unofficial and social contexts, however, Franklin spoke and wrote freely in French. In Passy, he published a collection of "French Bagatelles", including several written by him in French and a few others written in English and translated into French by others.¹⁶ An important fraction of his personal correspondence while in Paris was also carried out in French, including his long exchange with the composer and *salonnière* Anne Louise Brillon de Jouy. In a careful analysis of this body of letters, Dorothy Medlin shows that Franklin was at this stage an advanced learner of French.¹⁷ He could express his ideas with ease (although crossings-out reveal he occasionally hesitated over word choices) and could correct his own errors in matters such as gender agreement. He could even engage in word-play in French.¹⁸ This aptitude, or at least comfort, in French ingratiated him among elites at the court of Louis XVI, where he socialised easily, hosting lavish American-themed dinners, marketing American products, and, famously, wearing a fur hat among the "powdered heads" of the nobility.¹⁹ In these spaces of sociability, Franklin was instrumental in luring French support for American independence,

which culminated in the Franco-American alliance of 1778. In reaching a common settlement with French partners, Franklin's French abilities and his fame combined to sway French opinion towards the American cause.

More broadly, Franklin seems to have recognised the importance of language learning for the United States' future diplomatic relations. This is particularly evident in his relationship with his grandsons. He sent his daughter's son, Benny Bache, to a francophone Swiss boarding school with the express purpose of preparing him to contribute to American relations with European powers.²⁰ Later, he recommended William Temple Franklin for a post in foreign service, noting his excellent French language skills.²¹ In imagining the United States' diplomatic future, in other words, Franklin highlighted linguistic training as a key asset.

The same, however, cannot be said for the majority of his fellow American diplomats. In the course of the American Revolution, congressional members sent over increasing numbers of diplomatic agents to European courts. One by one, American representatives attempted to broker connections with all the major European courts from Madrid to St. Petersburg.²² In finding a sufficient corps of representatives, however, congressional members resorted to selecting less and less upon linguistic ability and more upon who was readily available (or willing) to make such arduous (and mostly futile) journeys. It must be remembered that an early American diplomatic career was not an enticing prospect. A voyage across the seas put American revolutionaries at risk of capture by the British navy. A stint in Europe also removed them from the scene of action and their own interests in the United States. Moreover, payment for such risks and sacrifices was low, often not even covering the costs of the mission.²³ As a result, most militia diplomats lacked any adequate abilities in the French language and therefore relied upon English as a communicative medium.

Unsurprisingly, problems in expression and communication plagued many of the early American missions to various European courts. During the War of American Independence, members of the Continental Congress sanctioned emissaries to visit courts beyond France in order to seek out material aid or political assistance in the struggle against Great Britain. The Germanic courts of the Holy Roman Empire featured among the foreign powers prized by American representatives who hoped not only for support from these courts but also expected something could be done to counter the supply of Hessian mercenaries provided to the British by several princely states.²⁴ As the ruling dynasty of the Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburgs became a notable target for American diplomatic aspirations within central Europe. The specific impetus to send an envoy to Vienna arose out of the hope that recognition could also be gained from one of the largest European states with an impressive military capacity. Finding support for the American cause through these initiatives was the ultimate aim of William Lee, named the official representative to the courts of Berlin and Vienna by the Continental Congress in 1777.

Lee, a merchant from the prominent Lee family of Virginia, received his commission due to the influence of his extensive family within early American politics rather than for any consideration of his diplomatic abilities.²⁵ His prior European experience consisted entirely of a modest mercantile career in London where he

dabbled in politics before the Revolution and his family's revolutionary reputation forced him to leave for Paris. In France, he served as a commercial agent for the Congress and gained a limited diplomatic and linguistic exposure. Contemporary observers noted with surprise Lee's sudden diplomatic appointment to two of the most important European courts. "Neither chance nor accident," wrote one American officer with astonishment at the news of Lee's appointment, "could ever have named William Lee a commissioner to the first court of Europe [Vienna] or indeed to any court in the world".²⁶ In spite of the misgivings of his compatriots, Lee ventured out to the imperial courts in early 1778, deciding for Vienna as his first place of call.

In the imperial capital, the British ambassador, Sir Robert Murray Keith, recognised the American geopolitical desire to co-opt the Habsburgs into their side of the war and so before any American diplomatic efforts occurred in person, Keith received assurances from the State Chancellor Prince von Kaunitz that no official American envoy would receive an audience. Kaunitz, who wished to remain neutral, cordially obliged to British demands. The French ambassador, the Baron de Breteuil, however, received instructions to aid any American efforts. From the French perspective, helping their American ally in Vienna could dislodge the stubborn Habsburg neutrality which had arisen partly following French reluctance to support their Habsburg allies in the War of the Bavarian Succession against Prussia which had erupted at the same time as Lee's mission to Vienna. As part of a greater game of geopolitics, Lee's mission threatened to disturb the balance of power among European states, potentially ushering in a wider conflict among European powers at the same time as the contest between the British and their Franco-American adversaries over North America.²⁷ Lee's mission to Vienna raised the stakes as it determined the wartime strategy of several states and the possible direction of the War of American Independence.

Yet, Lee's linguistic limitations impeded his ability to carry out this mission. Lee had no abilities in the main languages at court, French and German. He admitted his inadequacies in a private letter to his brother: "I doubt my abilities," he confessed on the eve of his departure,

for however anxious and zealous, it must require both much time and more capacity than is common for a man not versed in the crooked paths of courts to get into the mysteries of the most subtle cabinets of Europe and besides [at] about 40 years old, it is somewhat awkward to go to school to learn languages.²⁸

Ill-equipped, Lee's deficiencies forced him to rely upon his host and advisor Breteuil, who misjudged the stiff resolve of the State Chancellor to deny Lee any access to the Habsburg monarchs and to rebuff the American overtures. In several awkward encounters, Breteuil attempted to introduce Lee as a simple "gentleman traveller" with no diplomatic status, but even this resulted in silence from Viennese officials.²⁹ In one chance meeting, Breteuil and Lee interrupted an audience between Habsburg ministers and the British ambassador, who presented some

English guests. The episode tainted Lee's mission as an unwelcome intrusion into the harmony of Viennese diplomatic life and courtly etiquette, reflective again of how the society of states chafed at the imposition of early American diplomats who did not abide by the norms of protocol.

Lee never had much chance to demonstrate his diplomatic potential. Unlike Franklin in Paris, he could not convert his outsider status into much of an advantage in Vienna. His appeal extended only among certain Viennese courtiers, but there Lee's linguistic weakness also became fatal. In several salons and over dinner parties, Breteuil aimed at introducing Lee to Viennese elites in an effort to find supporters for his acceptance at court.³⁰ Viennese courtiers did not take to the unknown middle-aged Virginian as much as Breteuil had hoped. At one dinner party, Viennese guests grew weary of his abilities to express himself in French. Under scrutiny from one diner who questioned Lee about America, Lee's communication utterly failed. He exercised poor grammar, awkward phrases, unintelligible sentences, and mixed-up homonyms, resulting in confusion. One observer noted, Lee "possesses a good head and reasons very well" but "speaks little French and expresses himself very badly".³¹ In such settings, usually the winning formula for Franklin's plans to woo the French at Versailles, Lee's inability to conduct himself in French undone his last shot at opening up the court of Vienna. Language in this instance prohibited diplomatic success based upon novelty.

After lingering on for several weeks in the imperial capital, Lee eventually admitted defeat and determined to leave Vienna. His mission to win over support and recognition from the Habsburgs ended in failure, in part due to his linguistic inadequacy. Remarking on Lee's last-ditch attempt to sway popular opinion, the British ambassador boasted to superiors in London that Lee's "publick Mission must certainly have proven fruitless as it was contemptible".³² On 2 July 1778, Lee left Vienna and no official American diplomat would return for another sixty years. The example of William Lee illustrates how officials in charge of crafting early American diplomacy were fully aware of the importance of language—especially the French language—in communicating their mission to the world of European diplomacy but could not always accommodate such prerequisites in determining personnel in crucial diplomatic instances such as Lee's mission to Vienna. Failing to achieve the precious utility of language undermined Lee's pursuit of legitimacy among the Viennese, forcing him to rely upon the French ambassador and causing disinterest in his quixotic campaign. In this regard, linguistic skills formed an integral element within the chance to discover further support in Europe.

Language Coping Strategies as Diplomatic Strategies: The Example of Apologetics

Practical concerns and a simple lack of appropriate personnel certainly determined the selection of monoglot diplomats such as Lee, and the limited linguistic abilities of these envoys undoubtedly had a concrete, and usually negative, impact on the success of American diplomatic missions. Yet, Americans' unorthodox language practices on the European diplomatic stage also played a role in the pursuit

of symbolic recognition in the eyes of established powers. Their preference for English had more complex, ambiguous outcomes in this quest for legitimacy. In the diplomatic context, language serves not only as a means of communication but also as an element of the performance of ambassadorship. Language choice is not only a utilitarian decision; it is a gesture. This was well understood in eighteenth-century diplomacy. For example, in his influential manual, *Discours sur l'art de negocier* (1737), Antoine Pecquet urged French diplomats not to rely on the dominance of their mother tongue when stationed abroad, as “il n’y a point de Peuple qui ne sçachent gré à un Etranger d’avoir appris leur Langue” (“there is no People who is not grateful to a Foreigner who has learned their language”).³³ As Pecquet implies, the ability and willingness to speak an interlocutor’s native tongue—perhaps especially when both parties share a *lingua franca*—acts as a sign of respect and friendship that might ingratiate ministers to their hosts. Conversely, sticking to one’s own language also sends a message. In some contexts, this choice might constitute a claim for the prestige and legitimacy of the language, and by extension the polity. Navigating language choice, in other words, opens up a field of possibilities for symbolic communication.

How did American diplomats approach the symbolic or gestural dimension of their language practices? Matters of international stature might have factored into the American preference for English. However, the United States’ identity as a former colony of Britain complicates the relationship between language, national identity, and political legitimacy. Moreover, questions of linguistic or cultural esteem do not tend to appear in contemporary American documents that mention language choice. On the contrary, diplomats most often call attention to their language practices in the form of apologies and excuses, in moments when they recognise the inconvenience their choices might cause to others. In their work on the languages of eighteenth-century Russian diplomacy, Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Gesine Argent examine apologies as a source of insight about expectations and norms around language use. A diplomat who apologises for switching languages, they note, acknowledges that he is “transgressing a rule of a sort”.³⁴ Linguistic transgressions constitute a mild form of what Lucien Bély has called “diplomatic incidents”, events that disrupt—and therefore reveal to the historian’s view—the unspoken norms and “underground tensions” that invisibly structure the day-to-day practice of diplomacy.³⁵ In the case of the American Commissioners, apologies and excuses for relying on English demonstrate their awareness of their deviation from standard custom and frame this as a deficit rather than a choice rooted in pride or a desire for prestige.

Beyond acknowledging the transgression of norms, however, apologies and excuses also function as rhetorical and performative strategies. Sociologist Erving Goffman analysed excuses and apologies as quotidian “performances” to repair a loss of esteem in some public setting, disassociating the transgressor from the transgression either by admitting culpability or by pleading “reduced responsibility”.³⁶ Communications scholar William Benoit extends Goffman’s analysis, pointing out that “defensive utterances” often seek to repair not only the audience’s opinion of the transgressor but also their attitudes “about the offensiveness of [their] acts”.³⁷ In

other words, some apologies and excuses challenge rather than reaffirm the transgressed norms to which they refer by softening negative judgments about a perceived offence. These interpretations of the performative dimension of apologies and excuses in everyday life prompt us to look more closely at how early American diplomats' defences of their linguistic deficiencies influenced, or might have influenced, their relationships with diplomatic partners and indeed how they might have altered the cultural and social standards of the diplomatic community.

The language of apology and excuse in Franklin's personal correspondence during his embassy in France offers some insight into the rhetorical, performative, and relational aspects of his linguistic choices. He calls attention to questions of language most often in his exchanges about private matters, readily admitting to his imperfections. This is certainly the case in letters to intellectual friends such as the duc de La Rochefoucauld who assisted him in disseminating his writings in France. Working through translations collaboratively, Franklin demonstrates a strong grasp of the subtleties of vocabulary.³⁸ Yet he always defers to the superior skills of his friend. For example, in a postscript to a letter to the duc de La Rochefoucauld, Franklin refers to corrections he has made on a draft of the duke's translations into French of some English-language documents: "I have attempted to make some Corrections; but not well understanding French, probably I have not done them well; they are in *Crayon*, which you can rub out".³⁹ More surprisingly, Franklin emphasises his linguistic weaknesses in his flirtatious letters to female correspondents. A little verse concludes a missive to Octavie Guichard Durey de Meinières, where modesty combines with a compliment in a gallant valediction: "Your English is better than you think it. I wish my French were equal to it.—My Heart however is good, and you have always a Place in it".⁴⁰ Franklin's supposedly frail French is also a recurring theme of his exchanges with Madame de Brillon. In one missive he avows:

Je suis sensible que J'ai ecrit ici beaucoup de très mauvais François; cela peut vous dégouter, vous qui ecrivez cette Langue charmante avec tant de purété & d'elegance. Mais si vous pouvez enfin dechiffrer mes Expressions obscures, gauches & impropres, vous aurez peutêtre au moins cette espece de Plaisir qu'on a en expliquant les Enigmes, ou en decouvrant des Secrets.

[I am aware that I have written a lot of very bad French here; that might disgust you, you who writes this charming language with such purity and elegance. But if you can decipher my obscure, gauche, and improper expressions, perhaps you will at least enjoy the kind of pleasure one has in solving puzzles or uncovering secrets].⁴¹

While maintaining a pose of humility, Franklin reframes his clumsy prose as a sort of *jeux d'esprit* and a potential source of entertainment for his correspondent.

In one sense, Franklin's playful meekness about his linguistic abilities extends his larger performance of the rusticity that America represented in the French imagination, and which underpinned his celebrity status in France.⁴² In his writings, he remarks on his distinction in Parisian society: a bare head (perhaps topped

by a beaver-fur cap) among a sea of powdered wigs, a man of simple tastes in a world of luxury and refinement.⁴³ His approach to language might fruitfully be considered in this context as another means of playing up the characteristics that marginalised him from the French court and diplomatic culture, reframing difference as a novelty that might appeal to French elites, garnering attention and favour. Beyond highlighting his exoticism, however, Franklin's apologetic rhetoric in matters of language strengthens his relationships with French interlocutors in material ways. His avowals of linguistic vulnerability prove effective in soliciting assistance with translations. They also seem to shift attitudes about the social acceptability of imperfect French. In response to one apologetic missive, for example, Brillonn reassures Franklin that she and her husband enjoy his idiosyncratic epistolary style: "Nous trouvons que ce que vous appellés votre mauvais françois, donne souvent du picquant a votre narration, par la construction de certaines phrases, et par les mots que vous inventés" ("We find that what you call your bad French often adds zest to your narration, through the construction of certain sentences, and the words that you invent").⁴⁴ By recasting linguistic flaws as a subject of gallantry, Franklin effectively transforms what could have been a source of stigma into a social attribute and a means of seduction.

These personal, social contexts are different from, though complementary to, the official interactions between the American Commissioners and French officials. In correspondence about diplomatic matters, the rhetoric of linguistic incompetence reappears (if in a less playful mode) and performs similar work, pleading American weakness to seek favour and accommodation by French hosts. One example occurs in August 1777, in an exchange with Rodolphe-Ferdinand Grand, a banker who also served as an intermediary between the Commissioners and the French foreign minister Vergennes. An American ship had been seized, and its owner, William Hodges, detained by the French, on charges of privateering against one of its sailors, the infamous Gustavus Conyngham. Franklin had previously commissioned Conyngham to outfit ships for the war effort in Dunkirk. His subsequent raids on British trade ships prompted what Jonathan Dull has called the "most severe diplomatic crisis between France and Britain since 1770".⁴⁵ Now, the Americans sought to secure Hodges' release from prison, while the French endeavoured to repair their relationship with the British by publicly holding the Americans to account. Through Grand, Vergennes suggested that the Commissioners write a formal letter about the matter to him, in French, following an outline he provided. The Commissioners politely refused to do this, excusing their choice with reference to the language barrier: "Being convinc'd by Experience of the Inconvenience of writing in a Language we do not well understand ourselves, or in one that is not well understood by those who are to read, we at present decline doing what by a late Instance we find is so subject to Misapprehension".⁴⁶ Citing the weakness of their language skills, the Commissioners avoid a path of action on an innocent pretext. They transform their weakness into a strength, refusing to bow to French demands. Moreover, the reference to the "late Instance" of "misapprehension" and the grounding of the decision in "Experience" reframes the previous, fraught discussion of Conyngham's case as, at least in part, a problem of language rather than

of substance. The phrasing also implicitly shifts some of the blame for the incident to the French who presumably misinterpreted American communications.⁴⁷ The question of language allows the envoys to construct an injured, vulnerable ethos that commands French acquiescence.

In their work on “small state” diplomacy in the twenty-first-century context, Jack Corbett, Yi-chong Xu, and Patrick Weller argue that the “competent performance of vulnerability” has emerged as an effective strategy for small and less economically developed polities.⁴⁸ Through rhetorical appeals to “existing liberal moral principles”, coalition-building, and the use of techniques such as the veto and gridlock in international organisations, small states have discovered a new form of strength and effectiveness, thereby shifting the diplomatic norms that presumed the superior power of larger, richer states and encouraged actors to strive only to climb the established international hierarchy on its own terms.⁴⁹ The eighteenth-century diplomatic scene is of course very different from today’s. Yet the general concept of “performance of vulnerability” can illuminate analogous strategies in a variety of contexts. In the case of the young United States, seeking legitimacy on the global stage, weakness was the only position available. It seems that Franklin, at least, appreciated how this position could be turned to American advantage, both in official exchanges and in the social settings that supported them. The rhetoric surrounding language practices emphasised the Americans’ *naïveté* in the world of European diplomacy, producing a response of accommodation and assistance from French agents which echoed the Americans’ broader aims for political recognition and material aid. By prompting French interlocutors to adjust their usual ways of working, moreover, American language practices in these earliest months of the United States’ political relations with France challenged the norms of diplomatic culture, arguably contributing to the slow erosion of French’s status as the *lingua franca* of modern international relations after the United States’ rise to international preeminence in the twentieth century.

Adapting to European Language Practices

In the years after independence, American leaders developed a hybrid approach to navigating language practices in diplomatic relations. On the one hand, American leaders increasingly appreciated the utility of foreign language acquisition in raising the prospects of the United States as a new nation. Linguistic competence became a more important criterion for the composition of missions and embassies stationed overseas. After 1800, American residents and their secretaries in France were much more likely to use French in their official communication. For example, the correspondence of John Armstrong, Minister to France in 1804–1810, appears almost exclusively in French, while Jonathan Russell, *chargé d’affaires* in 1810–1811, used both French and English.⁵⁰ In comparison to the conduct of the American Commissioners in the 1770s, these cases demonstrate a significantly late adaptation to European diplomatic language practices.

This shift occurred in a broader context of American appreciation for language study, which increasingly became apparent following the Revolution as proponents

of the United States sought to consolidate their new role in the world. Beyond the realm of diplomacy, Thomas Jefferson extolled the virtues of learning the French language in order to excel in the sciences. Jefferson perceived the best written books in the sciences to be published in French, a topic “better treated” by French than English writers.⁵¹ In numerous instances, he advised his younger kin to acquire the “indispensable” language if they were to achieve any learned success.⁵² French, in Jefferson’s mind, also offered a significant political function in tying together two natural allies, France and the United States, that fought on the side of liberty and justice. Learning French would allow the next generation to discover the “individuals and characters of a nation with whom we must long remain in the closest intimacy and to whom we are bound by the strong ties of gratitude and policy”.⁵³ For Jefferson, obtaining the French language opened up new intellectual and political horizons in which the United States could better navigate if the younger generations learned to master a means of communication in a Francophone world.

Jefferson’s predilection for France over Britain became a later hallmark of his political character in the 1790s and beyond. His views on the French language expressed above and written during the heady days of his embassy in Paris represented the beginning of a crescendo of Francophile views that Jefferson harboured personally and politically.⁵⁴ Yet before the political division of the 1790s, other American revolutionary figures—some from the other side of the emerging political spectrum—also advocated study of the French language. To promote French language acquisition was a non-partisan point during the early stages of American diplomacy. John Adams, for instance, may not have been able to master French but he certainly became cognisant of the rewards in doing so. “I hope you teach them all French”, he wrote back to his wife regarding their children at home, “[for] it is so useful a Language that they should all learn it”.⁵⁵ Adams practised what he preached. Two of his sons journeyed with them in order to receive what was then a rare opportunity for American youth: a European education. Both sons studied in French schools before following their father northwards, spending time in schools in Brussels as well as Leiden. His eldest son John Quincy Adams—a later president of the United States—excelled under such circumstances. He mastered several languages including French, Latin, German, and, to a degree, Dutch.⁵⁶ Much like his father, John Quincy Adams placed a premium on the French language above all. He drew up an extensive bibliography for his siblings back in Massachusetts for them to learn French. In this work, he compared the available French manuals in America with those to be found in Europe, noting the various strengths and weaknesses of these books and how to overcome them.⁵⁷ His prodigious advice reflected the high level of obtainment he achieved while in Europe. As a result of his mastery of French, John Quincy Adams became the secretary of the American representative to St. Petersburg in order to facilitate diplomatic interaction with the Russian court where French predominated among diplomatic circles and the American representative, the New England tradesman Francis Dana, could not command French fluently.⁵⁸ By valuing language study and achieving high levels of fluency, American statesmen integrated into European norms to have their country recognised as an equal and legitimate member of the diplomatic community.

In the early years of American diplomatic missions, secretaries who could be proficient in another language, especially French, were highly praised while those who could not perform well in a foreign language were derided as secretaries performed translating roles for the diplomats. John Adams, who came from a more sedate New England background, knew, like Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, more of ancient texts and the law than modern languages.⁵⁹ He came to rely upon younger secretaries to supplement his own deficiencies during his diplomatic service abroad. In most cases, secretaries were chosen not by linguistic ability but rather by their relationship with the diplomat. Secretaries accompanying American representatives were often family or close friends. In Adams's case, he hired John Thaxter Jr., his wife's nephew who also served as a secretary during Adams's time in Europe between 1779 and 1783. Adams, however, complained bitterly of Thaxter's poor linguistic skills, recording how Thaxter "understands no language, neither French nor Spanish".⁶⁰ Thaxter's case was by no means the only one. Another congressional agent sent to support Franklin's mission, Jonathan L. Austin faced the realization that his French skills were not up to scratch. In explaining why he could not yet translate diplomatic messages into French for dissemination on the continent, he explained, "My time its true has been so much employed for the Public, that I have not made that Proficiency in the French Language I otherwise might have done, yet doubt not I shall soon be able to inform them of everything relative to my proceedings in French".⁶¹ Both Thaxter and Austin exemplified the linguistic constraints prevalent in early American diplomatic missions, yet despite changing attitudes, little could be done to overcome insufficient language training among American diplomats.

A different set of concerns influenced diplomatic language practices in the American capital. The U.S. State Department archives reveal an overwhelming preference for English in the new country's conduct of international relations in the decades after independence. Apart from ceremonial letters nominally sent by heads of state to announce marriages, births, deaths, ambassador appointments and recalls, most outgoing correspondence with foreign agents appears either in English or with English translations or summaries. Correspondence indicates that English prevailed in most interactions between American officials and foreign ministers resident in the United States, even though this language was less familiar to European elites. Evidence suggests that many ambassadors and their secretaries learned English upon their arrival in the United States. For example, Rogier Gerard van Polanen, ambassador from the Netherlands from 1796 to 1802, began his embassy writing to the Secretary of State in French.⁶² By March 1798, his letters shifted into English. The embassy of French diplomat Louis-André Pichon made a similar transition in 1801. Its first letters in the new language bear the hallmarks of a non-native speaker, sprinkled with false cognates and French expressions literally rendered into English to produce awkward turns of phrase that even a poor translator would avoid when writing in their mother tongue.⁶³ Other envoys' correspondence testifies to more profound struggles with English. Letters from the Dutch *chargé d'affaires* Ten Cate to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams alternate between French and highly unidiomatic English containing phrases such as

“nearly since three weeks” and “an information”.⁶⁴ Enlightenment-era diplomats expected to learn languages as part of their profession. Yet the strength of the American preference for English and the relative unpopularity of English among Continental elites meant that linguistic apprenticeship was an especially common feature of European embassies in the early United States. The requirement to learn this new language marked the continued eccentricity of the U.S. with respect to the norms of European diplomatic culture.

Conclusion

With this bifurcated approach to diplomatic language practices, the United States negotiated a different kind of cultural claim to international legitimacy. While valuing the Francophone culture of Continental diplomatic society (and, in Franklin and Jefferson’s cases, of the Republic of Letters that overlapped with it) and benefiting politically from the ability to communicate smoothly with European partners, American diplomats also bolstered English’s status as an international language by encouraging resident ministers in the U.S. to learn and use it in their interactions. Adaptation to language practices in this case was a two-way street with both American and European representatives expanding their linguistic repertoire for diplomatic engagement.

Of course, the United States was not the only political entity to contest the dominant Francophonie of diplomatic culture. In the early nineteenth century, former Spanish colonies in Latin America, for example, tended to adopt Castilian for their diplomatic communications following independence. In this sense, the United States’ case reflects a broader trend towards a diversity of diplomatic language practices driven by imperialism and its legacies. Further research comparing North American and British linguistic practices could elaborate the radical dimension of the U.S.’s approach to language choice in its early diplomatic endeavours. By first challenging the established status quo of linguistic interaction among diplomatic corps, American representatives inherently drew distinction with their English-speaking British counterparts who were well-versed and able to *parle* in French. In this sense, linguistic choice could also reflect the changing political constellation on the path towards independence and marked something of a cultural break with British diplomacy. It is therefore important to acknowledge the impact of such large-scale political and structural changes on the day-to-day conduct of diplomacy and its cultural norms. The American Revolution in this regard represented not just a significant political moment but also a cultural challenge to the pre-existing diplomatic order. At the same time, the smaller-scale histories of individual diplomats in specific encounters reveal the full extent of these norms’ dynamism and contingency. In the cases exemplified above, we have seen how linguistic limitations as well as advantages came to shape the operation of diplomatic exchanges as a new power entered the fray. Practical necessity, rhetorical strategy, and the desire for international esteem all played a complex role in determining American diplomats’ language choices in particular situations. Diplomatic language practices reappear through these

histories not as a static norm that may simply be respected or transgressed but rather as a tool or set of possible strategies for negotiation.

Notes

- 1 Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, 3.
- 2 Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*, 2.
- 3 For a definition of the “society of states”, see Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 13.
- 4 Harrison, *A Powerful Mind*, 19–58; Middlekauff, “Education in Colonial America”. Rare exceptions were the few who had studied on the European continent; see, for example, Kerrison, “The French Education of Martha Jefferson Randolph”.
- 5 Nagel, *The Lees of Virginia*, 93–95; Van Vlack, *Silas Deane*, 18.
- 6 Kraus, “The Development of a Curriculum in the Early American Colleges”, 71.
- 7 Reinhold, “The Quest for ‘Useful Knowledge’”; Fisher, “Tradition in Transformation”, 357–374.
- 8 Owens, “Enlightenment and Education in Eighteenth Century America”, 536
- 9 Kraus, “The Development of a Curriculum in the Early American Colleges”, 71
- 10 Fatherly, *Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies*, 81–88.
- 11 Earlier American patriots had attempted to take the province of Quebec forcibly from the British, see Hatch, *Thrust for Canada* and for the mission, see Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, 2, 320–330.
- 12 John Adams to James Warren, 18 February 1776: *Papers of John Adams*, 4, 26–29.
- 13 Riddell, “Benjamin Franklin’s Mission to Canada”, 115–158.
- 14 Franklin, who in his early years as a printer used to publish a German-language press with some level of comprehension, never mastered much of German and lost much of it later in life, at least enough to not be able to read German letters at all, see: “Franklin to Baron Ulrich de Thun, 17 July 1781” (*The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* [PBF], 35, 274–275) and “Franklin to Jan Ingenhousz, 2 October 1781[–21 June 1782]” (PBF, 35, 544–551). In his exchanges with Giambattista Beccaria, Franklin admitted that he could read Italian well but not write in the language, see Pace, *Benjamin Franklin and Italy*, 8. Finally, Franklin received only a rudimentary Latin education during his youth but returned to the language after he had become acquainted with other modern languages and found his comprehension of Latin “greatly smooth’d” as a result, see Franklin, *Autobiography*, 168. For an overview of Franklin’s languages, see Lemay, *Franklin*, 2, 17–20.
- 15 Letter from Aranda to Grimaldi, 13 January 1777, in Yela Utrilla, *España ante la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 2, 938–939. Also quoted in Schiff, *A Great Improvisation*, 33.
- 16 See for example: “From Benjamin Franklin to Madame Brillon: Letter and Printed Bagatelle (“The Whistle”), 10 November 1779” (PBF, 31, 69–77).
- 17 Medlin, “Benjamin Franklin and the French Language”.
- 18 See a letter written to the Abbé Morellet, see “Franklin to Morellet, [after 5 July? 1779]” (PBF, 30, 50–53).
- 19 Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 73; Wilson, *Jefferson on Display*, 28–30. “Powdered heads” is Franklin’s phrase: See “Franklin to Emma Thompson, Paris, 8 February 1777”: (PBF, 23, 296).
- 20 “I have with me two Grandsons; one about 16, who will serve me as a private Secretary; the other a Child of 7, whom I purpose to place in some Boarding School, that he may early learn the French Language”: “From Benjamin Franklin to Silas Deane, 7 December 1776” (PBF, 23, 28–30). Later, Franklin would frequently boast that Ben spoke and wrote in French better than in English. See, for example: “From Benjamin Franklin to Richard Bache, 2 March 1778” (PBF, 26, 9–10); “From Benjamin Franklin to Sarah Bache, 3 June 1779” (PBF, 29, 612–615).

- 21 "I think it rather advisable for him to continue, if it may be, in the Line of public foreign Affairs, for which he seems qualified by a Sagacity, & Judgment above his Years, great Diligence and Activity, exact Probity, a genteel Adress, a Facility in Speaking well the French Tongue, and all the Knowledge of Business to be obtain'd by a four Years constant Employment in the Secretary's Office, where he may be said to have served a kind of Apprenticeship": "From Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Huntington, 12 March[–12 April 1781]" (PBF, 34, 443–448).
- 22 A holistic account of all early American diplomatic missions in Europe is still lacking, though the best overall account is to be found in Dull, *A Diplomatic History*. For the Spanish mission, see Coe, *The Mission of William Carmichael to Spain* and Kline, *Sarah Livingston Jay*, 159–170 and for St. Petersburg, see Cresson, *Francis Dana: A Puritan Diplomat and Griffiths*, "American Commercial Diplomacy in Russia".
- 23 For an example, see William Lee to Richard Henry Lee, 2 January 1778: *Letters of William Lee*, 314–319.
- 24 Kapp, *Friedrich der Grosse*, 18–21; Haworth, "Frederick the Great"; Dippel, *Germany and the American Revolution*, 38–40, 117–119; Singerton, *The American Revolution*, 99–100.
- 25 Lee's commission to Berlin and Vienna originated from his plea to his elder brother Richard Henry Lee to arrange a new station for him as the relations between the Lee brothers, both William and Arthur, in Paris with Franklin and Deane had broken down to an irretrievable level, see Singerton, *The American Revolution*, 102.
- 26 Mercer to Washington, 28 November: *The Papers of George Washington*, 321–325.
- 27 Roider, "William Lee", 166–168; Singerton, *The American Revolution*, 106–109.
- 28 William Lee to Francis Lightfoot Lee, 4 January 1778: *Letters of William Lee*, 325–329.
- 29 The National Archives at Kew [TNA], State Papers [SP] 80/220: Sir Robert Murray Keith to the Earl of Suffolk, 27 May 1778.
- 30 Singerton, *The American Revolution*, 113–117.
- 31 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Sonderbestände, Khevenhüller-Metsch Familienarchiv, Reigersburg, K. 183, Bd. 2: Count Franz-Xaver Koller to Princess Anna Khevenhüller-Metsch, 8 June 1778.
- 32 TNA, SP 80/220, Sir Robert Murray Keith to the Earl of Suffolk, 4 July 1778.
- 33 Pecquet, *Discours sur l'art de négocier*, xxxv–xxxvi.
- 34 Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 282.
- 35 Bély, "Anatomie de l'incident diplomatique".
- 36 Goffman, *Relations in Public*, 111–114.
- 37 Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies*, 3.
- 38 See, for example, his comments on how to render "industry" into French: "From Benjamin Franklin to La Rochefoucauld, 6 February 1778" (PBF, 25, 627).
- 39 "From Benjamin Franklin to [the Duc de La Rochefoucauld], [after 7 June 1777]" (PBF, 24, 138).
- 40 "From Benjamin Franklin to [Madame Durey de Meinières], 12 September 1783" (PBF, 40, 616).
- 41 "From Benjamin Franklin to Madame Brillon, [11 May 1779 or after]" (PBF, 29, 465–466).
- 42 Staiti, "Americans at Versailles", 291; Baetjer et al., "Benjamin Franklin, Ambassador to France", 59. Ashley Bruckbauer insightfully points out the agency of French artists in the fabrication of this image of Franklin, observing the visual allusions they make to the ideal, Rousseauian *législateur*. She concludes that French artists played a role in "len[ding] the figure and his cause legitimacy by aligning him with prestigious precedents drawn from philosophical circles, ancient history, classical mythology, and even the French monarchy". See Bruckbauer, *Dangerous Liaisons*, 271 and 301.
- 43 "Figure me in your mind as jolly as formerly, and as strong and hearty, only a few Years older, very plainly dress'd, wearing my thin grey strait Hair, that peeps out under my

- only Coiffure, a fine Fur Cap, which comes down my Forehead almost to my Spectacles. Think how this must appear among the Powder'd Heads of Paris": "Franklin to Emma Thompson, Paris, 8 February 1777" (PBF, 23, 296).
- 44 "To Benjamin Franklin from Madame Brillon, 16 [November] 1779" (BPF, 31, 112). This comment echoes Franklin's own enjoyment of "a little tincture of French idiom" that flavors a text written in English by "an unknown philosopher" in "Extract from Franklin's Journal, 13 December 1778" (BPF, 28, 224). This flirtatious exchange continues in later letters, with Franklin playfully complaining that Brillon's enjoyment of his mistakes prevents him from making progress in the language: "Il me semble que vous vous moquez de moi, en me disant que mon mauvais François est meilleur avant d'être corrigé qu'après. Si je ne trouve pas un bon Corrigeur, et si je ne regard pas ses Corrections, comment puis-je apprendre à écrire la Langue comme il faut?" ("It seems to me that you make fun of me when you say that my bad French is better before being corrected than after. If I don't find a good editor, and if I don't take heed of their corrections, how can I learn to write the language as I should?"): "From Benjamin Franklin to Madame Brillon, 23 November 1780" (BPF, 34, 47).
- 45 Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat", 25.
- 46 See also "The American Commissioners to Ferdinand Grand, [26 August 1777]" (BPF, 24, 468).
- 47 It might be telling that, according to editors, in a manuscript draft of this letter, Franklin added then deleted the word 'daily' before 'Experience'.
- 48 Corbett, Xu & Weller, "Norm Entrepreneurship and Diffusion 'from Below' in International Organisations", 651–652.
- 49 Corbett, Xu & Weller, "Norm Entrepreneurship and Diffusion 'from Below' in International Organisations", 656–657.
- 50 See letters in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (La Courneuve, *infra* AMAE), CP USA, vol. 60 and 65. Thanks to Vladislav Rjéoutski for sharing images of these documents.
- 51 Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, 19 August 1785: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* [PTJ], 8, 405–408.
- 52 Jefferson to Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph Jr., 6 July 1787: PTJ, 11, 556–559; Jefferson to Mary 'Polly' Jefferson, 20 September 1785: PTJ, 8, 532–533.
- 53 Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph Jr., 27 August 1786: PTJ, 10, 305–309.
- 54 Onuf & Gordon-Reed, "*Most Blessed of the Patriarchs*", 97–133.
- 55 John Adams to Abigail Adams, 21 August 1778: *Adams Family Correspondence*, 79–80.
- 56 Levin, *The Remarkable Education*, 54, 66–67.
- 57 John Quincy Adams to Charles Adams and Thomas Boylston Adams, 3 October 1778: *Adams Family Correspondence*, 102–107.
- 58 Offord, Rjéoutski & Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 263–326; Cresson, *Francis Dana: A Puritan Diplomat*, 155, 178.
- 59 Bernstein, *The Education of John Adams*, 13–43.
- 60 John Adams, 11 January 1780: *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 426–429.
- 61 Jonathan Loring Austin to the Commissioners, 19 September 1778: *Papers of John Adams*, 7, 55–56.
- 62 See multiple letters from Roger Gerard van Polanen to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering (NARA, RG 59, Notes from Foreign Missions, 1789–1906, Notes from the Netherlands Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1784–1906, vol. 1, Sept. 17, 1784–9 May 1836).
- 63 "Agreeably to your request", begins a short note, "I forward herewith inclosed my passports for M. C. Pinkney and his suite & family as also for Mr J. Graham his secr.": Letter from Louis-André Pichon to Secretary of State James Madison, Philadelphia, 23 June 1801 (NARA, RG 59, Notes from Foreign Missions, 1789–1906, Notes from the French Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1789–1906, vol. 1, June 7,

- 1789—Mar. 1, 1805). There are many such examples in the archive. Danish ambassador P. Blicher Olson started out his embassy writing in French and Latin, then switched to English in 1802, while his successor Peder Pedersen made the same transition even quicker, after just one month in the United States. See letters from Blicher Olson to Secretary of State James Madison in French (31 July 1801—16 January 1802 in French and 29 July 1802—August 1803 in English) and from Pedersen to Secretary of State James Madison (19 August 1803—30 August 1803 in French and after 30 September 1803 in English) (NARA, RG 59, Notes from Foreign Missions, 1789–1906, Notes from the Danish Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1801–1906, July 31, 1801—Aug. 22, 1832).
- 64 Letter from Ten Cate to John Quincy Adams, 23 December 1817 (NARA, RG 59, Notes from Foreign Missions, 1789–1906; Notes from the Netherlands Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1784–1906, Register May 19, 1828—Dec. 14, 1906, volume 1 Sept. 17, 1784—May 9, 1836).

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Notes: The index includes personal and geographical names, as well as selected terms and concepts related to the book's subject matter that may be useful to the readers. Diplomats and other members of diplomatic personnel are identified as such in the index. Page numbers in **bold** and in *italics* indicate tables and figures respectively. While the page number followed by “n” denotes note numbers.

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