Diplomacy & Statecraft

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fdps20

Translation and Diplomacy: The Ins and Outs of Social-Systemic Boundaries

Sergey Tyulenev

To cite this article: Sergey Tyulenev (2022) Translation and Diplomacy: The Ins and Outs of Social-Systemic Boundaries, Diplomacy & Statecraft, 33:3, 589-604, DOI: 10.1080/09592296.2022.2113261

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2022.2113261

Published online: 29 Sep 2022.

DIPLOMACY & STATECRAFT
2022, VOL. 33, NO. 3, 589–604
https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2022.2113261

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Translation and Diplomacy: The Ins and Outs of Social-Systemic Boundaries

Sergey Tyulenev

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Durham University, Durham, UK

ABSTRACT

Boundaries of social systems stratify into internal and external layers with respective social agencies. Diplomacy is an internal – endohomorous – phenomenon that cannot reach the other side of the boundary without an external – ectohomorous – phenomenon such as translation. Translation is the outmost contact point where the system meets the environment – another system. Ectohomorous phenomena can fulfil their social-systemic function without endohomorous, but not the other way round. Diplomats can deal with systems in the environment only indirectly via translation, which specialises in direct contacting the system's other. Distinguishing between endohomorous and ectohomorous phenomena helps to appreciate the difference in social functioning of diplomacy and translation.

Modern societies can be described as systems.[1] Systems are composed of a variety of sub-systems responsible for various social functions. Arguably, translation can appear as one of the social function sub-systems.[2] Sub-systems can further be divided into those responsible primarily for fulfilling systemic internal functions, for instance, co-ordinating power relations within the overall social system, and those fulfiling external functions, such as informing the social system about and enabling it to deal with external social systems, with the system's environment. For instance, politics is an internal function sub-system. Its primary function is to handle power distribution within the system. Other internal function sub-systems are the economy, science, law, art, religion, education, mass media, and so on.[3]

Translation, diplomacy,[4] trade relations, military actions, such as allying or warring, cultural exchanges, and espionage are all examples of social phenomena ensuring the interaction of the system with its environment. Such social structures are referred to as boundary phenomena.[5] They help the overall social system – society – communicate with social systems in its environments, that is, other societies. The function of boundary phenomena in society is comparable to the function of doors, windows, walls in a house or eyes, ears, and skin in a living organism.

CONTACT Sergey Tyulenev sergey.tyulenev@durham.ac.uk School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Durham University, New Elvet, Durham DH1 3JT, UK

In what follows two types of boundary phenomena will be distinguished, thereby developing further both Luhmann's sketchily presented idea of social boundary phenomena and Tyulenev's application of that idea to translation.[6] The boundary of the social system, at a closer inspection, turns out to be stratified into two layers, internal and external. The internal layer is a systemic structure seeking contact with the outside world. The external layer is a systemic structure that is located at the actual contact point of the system and its environment – most commonly, another system in that environment. As an example, imagine one state contacting another in a negotiation of some sort. The internal layer is a diplomatic corps, for instance, a social structure interacting with its counterpart structure of another state; the external layer is the actual exchanges in the form of words, phrases, gestures, mediated, or translated, between the representatives of the interacting states. The internal layer of the social boundary will be termed endohomorous; the external – ectohomorous.[7] The terms are coined based on Greek words *endon* meaning *within* and *ektos* meaning *without, outside* combined with the word *homoros* meaning *bordering on*, a cognate of the noun *horos – boundary, limit, frontier*. Thus, endohomorous phenomena are those phenomena that are on the inside of the social boundary whereas ectohomorous phenomena are those on its outside and they are the point of actual contact of the system with its environment.

Why is it important to distinguish between endohomorous and ectohomorous phenomena? Although this question is dealt with later, for now, suffice it to say here that distinguishing between the two types of boundary phenomena would help in two respects. First, in appreciating the role(s) translation plays in the operation of social-systemic boundaries; and, second, in adding yet another dimension in the discussion of the translation versus translator debate in 'Translation and Interpreting Studies [TIS]'. A definition of diplomacy is activities of handling international relations. Usually the involved countries' representatives conduct it. A diplomatic corps representing a state includes an ambassador, one or several diplomats, attachés who assist the ambassador in a particular area of expertise, as well as a sundry of other specialists.

Diplomats usually are required to have a command of the language(s) of the country to which their government sends them. The importance of combining diplomacy – as a collective agency – with expertise in foreign languages stands to reason: how can someone deal with a foreign authority if s/he does not speak the same language with them? The *caveat* 'diplomacy as a collective agency' means to indicate that not all workers of a legation need to be or are proficient in the language of the country in which they are stationed. But a legation can hardly function without at least some of its workers speaking the language of the host country or a lingua franca.

The distribution of the expertise in the required foreign language and culture can vary. Although it is helpful for emissaries or ambassadors to be

familiar with the culture and know the language(s) used in the country of their assignment, it is not always necessary. In fact, the practice is that emissaries are relocated regularly and routinely to different countries, and they are not always appointed to their country's legations in the same geographic area or in countries of similar cultures and languages. For instance, before the First World War, American diplomats were sent mostly to Europe and Latin America.[8] At that period, French was the language of diplomacy in Europe and, in Latin America, Spanish was widely used. The number of the languages employed was limited and that simplified the task of acquiring languages for emissaries: basically, they needed either French, if they were to be posted to a European country, or Spanish if sent to Latin America. There are plenty of examples of using a *lingua franca* in diplomatic interactions. In medieval and Renaissance Europe, Latin was the language of international interactions. In the eighteenth and twentieth century, as has been said, French played the same role. Today English is often used as a *lingua franca*. There may be regional *lingua francas*, such as Russian in the former socialist camp in the twentieth century.

The importance of knowing languages and cultures has always been realised for workers of diplomatic missions. When in the nineteenth century, the newly united Germany entered the struggle of European Powers for world domination, it 'needed many men with knowledge of different and esoteric languages'.[9] In 1887, Otto von Bismarck, the German chancellor, opened the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* – School of Oriental Languages – that 'sought to produce not more philologists, but to train aspiring diplomats, colonial officials, and missionaries in the languages of peoples beyond Europe'.[10] Special foreign language textbooks are published to help specifically this group of language students. M.C. Saihgal authored *Modern Hindi Grammar* in 1958 as 'a practical guide to the Indian national language for the use of Foreign Diplomats, Technicians, Executives, Attaches, Trade Representatives'.[11] Saihgal was introduced as 'a specially competent teacher'[12]; noteworthy is that the author was presented as an experienced teacher, rather than a linguist. It shall also be noted that his *Hindi Grammar* is a 'practical guide'[13]: the materials and topics introduced tend to reflect the everyday and contemporary usage as opposed to such aspects of Hindi as its history or a theoretical, in-depth examining of grammar and vocabulary. *Modern Hindi Grammar* is 'with exercises & full vocabulary'.[14] The goal is to train foreign diplomats and other foreign professionals to prepare them for daily, practical functioning in postcolonial India – independent since 1947 – in its own 'national' language rather than English. The textbook has proved to be so effective that it is still in print.

All these materials seem to show that diplomats may do without translators or interpreters to an extent. Yet no matter how well trained a diplomat may be, a foreign language remains foreign to him or her and every time when these

linguistically educated diplomats, *attachés*, and other workers of foreign missions deal(t) with foreign texts or people, they inevitably translate(d). This is the infrapersonal – internal – manifestation of translation.

The levels of command of a foreign language naturally vary from person to person, and even with the same person, they tend to change over time depending on the degree of the person's exposure to the language. This means that the level of conscious translation progresses or regresses, yet, except perhaps only highly recurrent linguistic situations, translation stays with the foreign learner, and it is unlikely that his/her *Sprachgefühl* as far as a foreign language is concerned will ever reach the level of the command of his/her mother tongue in all aspects and spheres of usage.

Operating directly in a foreign language in an official situation for a diplomatic worker is usually discouraged. This is so today, and it was so even when speaking foreign languages was more common in Europe. Several examples are telling. In his treatise *Arte of English Poesie* published in 1589, George Puttenham discussed language in general and the English language in particular as a means of public speaking, including situations of using it by ambassadors. He argued that, when in service, ambassador should avoid speaking foreign languages to avoid any possibility of mistake or indecency interfering with fulfilling their diplomatic duties. Puttenham gave a number of examples. Three are essential to this exegesis.

An ambassador from Henry VIII to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, was commissioned to convince Charles to take Henry's side rather than the Pope Clement VII's in his request to divorce Catherine of Aragon – 'Ladie Catherine of Castell' – Charles' aunt. Henry wanted his ambassador to remind Charles of Henry's 'great kindnesse and friendship', and his 'disbursing for him sundry great summes of monie which were not all yet repayd' and 'furnishing him at his neede with store of men and munition to his warres'.[15] But the ambassador miscarried the commission and in the context of the present discussion it is especially important to see why:

> The Embassadour for too much animositie and more then needed in the case, or perchance by ignorance of the proprietie of the Spanish tongue, told the Emperour among other words, that he was *Hombre el mas ingrate enel mondo*, the ingratest person in the world to vse his maister so. The Emperour tooke him suddainly with the word, and said: callest thou me *ingrato*? I tell thee learne better termes, or else I will teach them thee. Th'Embassadour excused it by his commission, and said: they were the king his maisters words, and not his owne. Nay quoth th'Emperour, thy maister durst not haue sent me these words, were it not for that broad ditch betweene him & me, meaning the sea, which is hard to passe with an army of reuenge. The Embassadour was commanded away & no more hard by the Emperor, til by some other means afterward the grief was either pacified or forgotten [...][16]

Puttenham explains that 'all this inconueniece grew by misuse of one word'.[17] That is why Puttenham recommends that 'Ambassadour speake his

principall comandements but in his own language, or in another as naturall to him as his owne'.[18] According to Puttenham, that was a common practice 'in all places of the world sauing in England'[19]:

> The Princes and their commissioners fearing least otherwise they might vtter any thing to their disaduantage, or els to their disgrace: and I my selfe hauing seene the Courts of Fraunce, Spaine, Italie, and that of the Empire, with many inferior Courts, could neuer perceiue that the most noble personages, thou they knew very well how to speake many forraine languages, would at any times that they had bene spoken vnto, answere but in their owne, the Frenchman in French, the Spaniard in Spanish, the Italian in Italian, and the very Dutch Prince in the Dutch language.[20]

Although not in official settings, foreign languages were spoken by representatives of various courts. In other words, diplomacy, whilst dealing with the other side, withdrew from the actual point of contact with the other side: a Frenchman whilst in a foreign court would not speak in the language of the court even if he knew it, he would use his own language. Recast in the social-systemic terms, although the representative of a system – diplomat – was capable of interacting with the environment directly, he did not do it. The system interacted with its environment through the diplomat, the action was taking place at the boundary but not on its external side, rather the diplomat acted on the internal side of the social-systemic boundary. The diplomat, and the system through him, may be said to have acted endohomorously.

How could the diplomat speaking his own language communicate with the courtiers of the hosting country? What was at the contact point of the two systems interacting through their representatives? Another example from Puttenham's book needs consideration:

> *Henrie* Earle of Arundel being an old Courtier and a very princely man in all his actions, kept that rule [of speaking officially only in his own language] alwaies. For on a time passing from England towards Italie by her maiesties licence, he was very honorably enterteined at the Court of Brussels, by the Lady Duches of Parma, Regent there: and sitting at a banquet with her, where also was the Prince of Orange, with all the greatest Princes of the state, the Earle, though he could reasonably well speake French, would not speake one French word, but all English, whether he asked any question, or answered it, but all was done by Truchemen. In so much as the Prince of Orange maruelling at it, looked a side on that part where I stoode a beholder of the feast, and sayd, I maruell your Noblemen of England doe not desire to be better languaged in the forraine languages. This was by and by reported to the Earle. Quoth the Earle againe, tell my Lord the Prince, that I loue to speake in that language, in which I can best vtter my mind and not mistake.[21]

Puttenham presents the Earl of Arundel as a wise man in that he did not speak a foreign language – it did not allow him to best utter his mind. In contacting the representatives of the Court of Brussels, he dealt with the foreign but only indirectly; he left it for the 'Truchemen' to make the direct contact with the other side. In middle French, the word *truchemen* meant

interpreter, and it was a borrowing of the Arabic word *targuman* meaning *translator/interpreter*, or *dragoman*. This 'truchemen' was the very joining point of two social systems. Whilst diplomacy was on the inside of the social-systemic boundary, translation/interpreting was on the outside of the social-systemic boundary. Translation/interpreting acted as an ectohomorous systemic phenomenon.

The failure of Henry VIII's envoy is interesting in the present discussion because it makes the invisible visible. Translation inevitably happens within the mind of every diplomatic agent – infrapersonally – who has a command of the language of the country in which she or he works, but it is hard to observe it unless it surfaces. The English ambassador's error was clear evidence of the translation process taking place in his mind. If translation had been smooth and flawless, one might not have noticed it and, in the case of a diplomat, one might have thought that it was a case of Spanish being 'another [language] as naturall to [the diplomat] as his owne'.[22] But as soon as there was a slip, one can be certain that whatever the words the diplomat spoke were a result of a translation process. The diplomat failed by taking upon himself to act ectohomorously when his mission required him to act only endohomorously, that is, he was supposed to pass the content of his king's message, not its verbal expression. He was to act on the internal side of the boundary, whilst somebody more skilful in Spanish should have taken upon himself the actual boundary crossing by rending the *English* content in Spanish words. What became obvious happens in many other diplomats' interactions with their hosts. Yet wise diplomats, such as the Earl of Arundel, acted endohomorously, leaving the translators/interpreters to act ectohomorously.

The discussed cases help show the difference between translation and translator as agents in diplomatic transactions. Diplomacy is practiced across the social-systemic boundary; diplomats are advised or even required to gain a command of the language(s) of the countries they work in. Yet they are also advised to exercise caution and act endohomorously: that is, staying within the remit of diplomacy, an endohomorous phenomenon. The remit of diplomacy may be and is crossed by diplomats speaking foreign languages but that is done at their own risk of less uttering their minds and more making mistakes, mistakes more serious as was the case with Henry VIII's ambassador or less serious as was in another case described by Puttenham:

> Another Ambassadour vsed the ouersight by ouerweening himself that he could naturally speake the French tongue, whereas in troth he was not skilfull in their termes. This Ambassadour being a Bohemian, sent from the Emperour to the French Court, where after his first audience, he was highly feasted and banquetted. On a time, amongst others, a great Princesse sitting at the table, by way of talke asked the Ambassador whether the Empresse his mistresse when she went a hunting, or otherwise trauailed abroad for her solace, did ride a horseback or goe in her coach. To which the Ambassadour answered vnwares and not knowing the French terme, *Par ma foy elle*

> *chenauche fort bien; & si en prend grand plaisir*. There was good smiling one vpon another of the Ladies and Lords, the Ambassador wist not whereat, but laughed himselfe for companie. This word *Chenaucher* in the French tongue hath a reprobate sence, specially being spoken of a womans riding.[23]

Here the Bohemian ambassador's error did not cost him as dearly, as Henry VIII's envoy only because the *faux pas* was made 'after his first audience', for example, after he had fulfilled his official diplomatic duty and, one might add, because he made his mistake in describing his empress' horse-riding habits using an unsuitable verb in his empress' absence.

Once again, evidence of translation existed in the mind of the endohomorous agent through his ectohomorous action – the infelicitous French phrase he produced. The problem arises when endohomorous agents instead of using translation take upon themselves to act ectohomorously, that is, they act as translators rather than diplomats and thereby run the risk of failing in both capacities. There is nothing wrong with their speaking foreign languages, which implies an act of translation from their native tongues into the languages foreign to them; there is nothing wrong if sometimes they choose words with connotations that may not be appropriate for an occasion. There is nothing wrong with all that as long as their translation does not surface in their speech when they act in their capacity of diplomats. Diplomats should act endohomorously. When Puttenham wrote his text, the ectohomorous function was associated with a special agent – *truchemen*. The truchemen is there on the edge of the system the diplomat represents; the truchemen is the locus of meeting of the interacting social systems.

Social systems constitute and maintain themselves by virtue of a difference from their environment; the difference is regulated by their boundaries.[24] This implies the vital importance of boundaries in the structure of social systems. Boundaries separate the system from the environment but also they connect the two. It implies selectivity of what is allowed in and what is kept outside. Boundaries reduce the complexities that meet: the inevitable selectivity of boundaries reduces both the complexity of the system and the complexity of its environment. Both the system and its environment are rendered because there is the boundary between them making them indeterminable for each other. As a result, new function subsystems emerge vested with the responsibility to regulate the system and environment's indeterminability.[25] Arguably, boundary phenomena, translation included, are such social mechanisms. Boundary phenomena regulate to what extent the system can see its environment and, *vice versa*, by opening or closing the system to the environment and the environment to the system or opening/closing them to each other to a greater or lesser degree. This property of translation as a boundary phenomenon has been studied in TIS as the problem of the relationship between translation and censorship.[26]

Boundary phenomena, although influenced by the internal social systemic determinants,[27] handle the difference between the system and its environment, that is, they are *loci* where the system's own meets the environmental, foreign. Unlike the system in which only those elements that comply with the system's operational identity, whether actually or potentially, exist, and unlike the environment in which only those elements which do not comply with the system's operation identity, boundary phenomena contain both types of elements. That is why there have been attempts to consider such structures' third spaces.[28] First, however, the differences tackled by communication systems contain only elements that are attributable as either belonging to the system or to the environment. Second, there is only one operational mode that is observed, that of the system that accepts or rejects elements according to the operational identity of the system. In other words, no elements of a third nature are processed in a way that would be different from how the system processes whatever it processes. That is why one cannot speak of a third space in the system–environment interactions.

Boundary phenomena are loci in which negotiations between the elements of the interacting systems take place. In the examples above, both Henry VIII's envoy and the Bohemian ambassador made mistakes that were wrong terms influenced by their insufficient command of the language which they attempted to speak. Those wrong terms belonged to one of the interacting systems, a wrong Spanish or French word; possibly, those mistakes were results of calquing of the speakers' native tongues. Thus, the interacting elements, to cite the Earl of Arundel, belonged either to the system – a social system using a particular language – in which the speakers might have best uttered their minds or to the other system – another social system using another language – in which the used word was a mistake. This view of boundary phenomena shows them as ruptures between system and environment.

Another approach to interpreting the operation of boundary phenomena, more relevant to the present discussion, is as follows. Boundary phenomena stabilise the difference between the system and the environment in terms degrees of complexity. The degrees of complexity are negotiated by the interacting systems' boundary phenomena.[29] How are the negotiations done?

As shown above, there are different boundary phenomena such as translation and diplomacy. Both translation and diplomacy's primary systemic function is to stabilise the difference between the system and its environment by regulating the indeterminability resulting from the boundary's reduction of complexity of the interacting systems – the system to which translation and diplomacy belong and a system in its environment with which the system interacts. But the two boundary phenomena reduce complexity differently, for instance, to different extents. Diplomacy is responsible for the *content* of the interaction between the systems. Diplomats pass on reactions and decisions of

their government to the other side at the level of contents – topics, meanings, and intentions. For example, if their government expresses dissatisfaction about the other side's action(s), the ambassador hands note of protest. Yet the note of protest will have to go through the hands of translators to make its content accessible to the other side. Thus, translation is responsible for what might be termed as the *expression* of the content, the actual sociocultural and linguistic appearance of the note to be handed. That is how translation stabilises the system–environment difference.

This distribution of roles in the system–environment is prompted by the place translation and diplomacy occupy within the boundary. Diplomacy can reduce complexity but only to an extent. For instance, one of the ways of reducing complexity is providing information.[30] Complexity is a range of options; information excludes some of the options by pointing to the selected option. Note of protest points to an actualised attitude of the government – amongst all possible reactions, the government is shown to disagree with the other side's action(s). Diplomacy is capable of reducing the complexity of its system for the other side by passing on the decision of it government to the other side – handing note of protest. Yet diplomacy cannot cross the boundary all the way to the other side: it operates on the inside of the boundary, endohomorously, it does not reach the other side until translation, the ectohomorous agent, steps in.

Diplomats may try and cross the full breadth of the boundary, yet they run a risk of repeating the failures of the diplomats depicted by Puttenham. The problem was that the diplomats assumed the role of translators aspiring to reduce the complexity of their systems captured in the contents of the messages they carried, all the way to the level of the expressions of those messages in the foreign languages that would make the contents accessible to the other side. And they failed. Arundel's success served as a positive counter-example in that he acted strictly endohomorously. He allowed the ectohomorous agent – truchemen-interpreter – to make the final step in crossing the linguocultural part of the systemic boundary and fulfilled the function for which the institute of interpreting/translation existed.

The aforesaid may lead one to believe that theorising translation and diplomacy as two distinguishable sides of the social-systemic boundary suggests that any combination of the two in one person leads to failures such as those observed in the cases of Henry VIII's envoy or the Bohemian ambassador to the French court. It is important to stress that these cases served as convenient illustrations of the existence of the two sides of the social-systemic boundary and their respective positions within the boundary and their relations, rather than as a claim that the two boundary phenomena cannot be combined. A good example of an overlap of diplomacy and translation within the same person-agent is Johannes Kolmodin (1884–1933), a Swedish scholar, an Orientalist, who first came to Istanbul, for his research but soon he joined

the Swedish legation and worked there as an honorary attaché and later as a dragoman.[31]

A few words about the institute of dragomanry are called for. The word *dragoman* comes from the Turkish *tercüman* that, in turn, is a borrowing from Arabic – *terjuman* – meaning *translator/interpreter*. The word has a long history.[32] Originally in the book of Genesis of the Old Testament of the Bible in Chapter 42, Joseph, then an Egyptian courtier, acted as an interpreter for his brothers from Canaan. The word in Hebrew is *melitz*, which means intercessor, advocate, or ambassador. In Joseph's case, it clearly meant linguistic/cultural mediation between Hebrew and Egyptian. The earliest Aramaic translations of the Hebrew word in this meaning are *meturgeman*, or *translator/interpreter*. The Aramaic word is old, traced back to the Assyrian word *ragamu* meaning *to speak*. The word *meturgeman* or *turgeman* was borrowed from Aramaic to Hebrew – the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic is called *Targum* – Arabic, Turkish, and then into European languages such as Italian – *turcimanno* – or French – *truchement*. In English, the word became *dragoman*.

The institute of dragomanry was especially thriving in the Ottoman Empire and, later, in Turkey. It can be traced to as early as the thirteenth century but was institutionalised in the sixteenth century.[33] Dragomans were mostly Europeans because Moslem believers were not allowed to study European languages.[34] To understand the background for the appearance and evolution of the institute of dragomanry, it is important to appreciate the difference between the European Christian and Islamic civilisations in terms of the languages used. In Europe, multilingualism thrived. In addition to their mother tongue and other contemporary languages of the area in which they lived or conducted business, educated people knew Latin and Greek to be able to read, amongst other things, the Greco-Roman classics and sometimes Hebrew and Aramaic to understand the Scriptures.

In the Islamic world, the situation was very different. With the rise of Islam, one language, Arabic, gained importance over the many languages of antiquity that disappeared or became insignificant.[35] The various dialects of Arabic never developed into vernaculars, as did the European Romance vernaculars of Latin – Italian, Spanish, French, and others. One language, Arabic, was sufficient to meet all needs of the educated population and there was hardly any need to learn foreign languages, let alone languages of those who were viewed as infidels coming from beyond the imperial frontier. A tenth century Arabic author wrote:

> The perfect language is the language of the Arabs and the perfection of eloquence is the speech of the Arabs, all others being deficient. The Arabic language among languages is like the human form among beasts. Just as humanity emerged as the final form among the animals, so is the Arabic language the final perfection of human language and of the art of writing, after which there is no more.[36]

Only later were Persian and Turkish added to Arabic.

Yet there was a need to communicate with foreign cultures, at least from the period of the Crusades beginning in the twelfth-century onwards.[37] Professional interpreters and translators, known in Arabic as *tarjuman*, were used as mediators. Discussing the makeup of the milieu from which the interpreters came, Bernard Lewis identifies three groups, slaves, refugees and religious renegades, that is, the Christians who were converted to Islam, called by the Moslems *Muhtadi*, which means *those who found the true path to God*. Mostly the interpreters/translators came from foreign countries. There is little evidence about any interpreting activities on the part of those who were born in the Moslem lands and spent some time in a Christian country, for instance as prisoners of war or merchants or sailors.

From the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries, many Jews came from Europe, but their expertise in European languages was habitually lost with the second generation. Greeks and Armenians replaced the Jews. Starting from the seventeenth century, Christian families sent their sons to study in Europe, notably in Italy. They returned with a good command of a European language. All these groups were employed at various administrative levels across the Ottoman Empire where they mediated for practical purposes, such as collecting taxes or maintaining order. Eventually when resident embassies started to appear in the Empire, interpreting at the highest interstate level was needed. The Sublime Porte and foreign embassies – the Venetians, the Genoese, the French, the English, and so on – hired interpreters. The interpreters who served at this level were mostly Moslem converts – *Muhtadi* – from the outskirts of the Empire, Hungarians, Poles, Germans, Italians, and later Greeks. Members of the Greek patrician class educated in the West, known as Phanariots from the district Phanar in Constantinople/Istanbul, became the original official dragomans. The first of them to have the title of Grand Dragoman after 1661 was Panayotis Nicosias. The second was a medical doctor, Alexander Mavrokordatos, who founded a dragoman dynasty.

The embassies, in turn, relied on a different group of dragomans, the so-called Levantines, from the Italian *Levante*, sunrise; these were people from the east, *levantini*, only superficially familiar with European cultures as opposed to *ponentini*, people of the west, from the sunset. The Turks referred to *levantini* as *tatlisu frengi*, that is, sweet-water Franks, as opposed to real, salt-water Franks. The Levantines were mostly Catholics, some of Italian descent, some of whom intermarried with Greeks; they spoke predominantly Italian. The Levantines were frequently criticised for being incompetent – their command of Turkish seen as not always adequate – and disloyal – selling their services to those paying more, forming a self-contained social group truly loyal only to themselves. They could also sell either the secrets they learned during their interpreting sessions to the interested parties personally or, being related to one another, through their

relatives. Finally, as subjects of the Ottoman Empire, they were often too afraid to mediate faithfully and honestly, especially when it could be found unpalatable for the Ottoman authorities. A severe message from a foreign ambassador was likely to be rendered as a humble supplication. Eventually both parties reconsidered the type of people they used as dragomans: the European embassies stopped relying on the Levantines and the Porte on the Phanariot Greeks.

At some point the Venetians opened a special school in Istanbul for *giovani di lingua* – language youths[38]; the French started to prepare *les jeunes de langue*, language cadets of a sort. Teaching their own dragomans became a common practice for the English, Austrians, and Russians; and the students trained in the languages used in the region, especially Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. Later respective diplomatic missions in Istanbul or elsewhere in the Middle East employed them. As the old dragoman system using Levantines and Phanariots eventually fell into disuse in the nineteenth century, European dragomans replaced them.

Importantly, dragomans were not only interpreters; they had also administrative responsibilities in the diplomatic missions in which they served. Dragomans were highly esteemed: some employed by the Ottoman government, some were appointed as governors of the dependent regions.[39] These and some others proved to be experts and advisors and even social figures. Such was Martin Hartmann, who, being a dragoman, consulted the German consul in Beirut on transactions involving Arabic and Turkish. Occasionally he even substituted for the consul whilst the latter was away. But even more importantly, Hartmann played an important role contributing to social processes in the Arab and Islamic world when he served in the German consulate in Beirut (1876–1887).[40]

Dragomans serve as a prime example of how the translating agency may be interwoven with other agencies, notably diplomatic ones. Going back to Kolmodin, he was a scholar, Orientalist, and an expert in the Oriental languages amongst them Turkish. He started working at the Swedish legation. He was an honorary *attaché* and later appointed a dragoman. Kolmodin's case shows how his superior, a professional diplomat, lacking knowledge of the local culture, relied on a dragoman. At some point in his career, Komodin worked under the Swedish Envoy Gustaf Wallenberg who, before coming to Istanbul, had been in places as different as Tokyo and Beijing, and was a Germanophile.[41] Kolmodin was an indispensable guide for Wallenberg in a cultural environment completely new to him, even if the envoy was not always willing to do justice to his secretary's expertise. In a letter, Kolmodin complained how difficult it was sometime to work with Wallenberg: 'Unfortunately he is quite dull in the head but does not want to admit it and lets me assist in the talks he conducts. When things become messy afterwards, I have to try and set them right'.[42]

Kolmodin explained his duties in another letter, saying that he was preparing a survey of the situation of a 1919 revolt in Anatolia, a review of post-armistice Istanbul, writing the legation's report for the Swedish Parliament, describing the conditions in 1918 in Persia, the development of the Armenian question in the region, and more.[43] He also most probably translated the proceedings of the Turkish congress on the situation in Anatolia.[44] Thus, he was involved in translating but also in producing analytical reports about various political developments in Turkey or in neighbouring countries. Significantly, Kolmodin was officially appointed a dragoman in 1920 because he needed a status recognised by the Turkish authorities,[45] something showing how the office of translator/interpreter evolved into a significant diplomatic office.

The case of Kolmodinis interesting because he is considered the 'last dragoman'.[46] His career shows the institution of dragomanry as a sort of welding of translation with diplomacy in its crystallised form. In the beginning, dragomans translated and that is why they were *dragomans* – the etymology of the term. In the end, a diplomat sought appointment as a dragoman to deal with the Turkish authorities who obviously saw in dragomanry more than only the translating agency. In other words, originally, a dragoman was primarily a translator, and only secondly, he was involved in diplomacy; at the end, a dragoman was firstly a diplomat who, secondly, also translated. This is what happened in the case of Kolmodin: a diplomat by occupation, he had to seek to become a dragoman to gain weight in the eyes of the Turkish diplomatic authorities.

Social-systemic boundaries are stratified and that is how they fulfil their social function of stabilising the complexity and regulating the indeterminability in system–environment interactions. Diplomacy is an endohomorous phenomenon that cannot reach the other side of the boundary without an ectohomorous phenomenon such as translation. Translation is the outmost contact point in which the system meets the environment – another system. Ectohomorous phenomena can function without endohomorous, but not the other way round. Diplomats can deal with systems in the environment only indirectly via another boundary phenomenon, translation, carried out by its agents, translators, and interpreters or whatever they are called in different languages and cultures – those who specialise in directly contacting the system's other, who serve ectohomorously as the front people of the system.

This consideration leads back to the question, 'Why is it important to distinguish between endohomorous and ectohomorous phenomena?' First, this differentiation aids in appreciating the role(s) translation plays in the operation of social-systemic boundaries. Translation is located on the very edge of the system; it exists at the contact point of the system and its environment. Translation, whether infra- and interpersonal or whether done by

a professional or non-professional translating agent is a *sine qua non* of any cross-boundary inter-systemic activities

Second, the differentiation between endohomorous and ectohomorous phenomena helps appreciate yet another dimension in the discussion of the translation versus translator debate in TIS.[47] There may be no person who would do only translation, for example, act in a fashion that is associated with professional interpreters and translators; but there may still be translation as an action. Translation may be infrapersonal, but it is always present in cross-boundary inter-systemic interactions. What becomes of the calls to focus on a translator rather than translation in TIS? Who is the translator in the cases described by Puttenham: diplomats and *truchemen* or only the latter? If diplomats are considered as translators, the concept *translator* is to be broadened because implicitly the concept *translation* is broadened. If only actors like *truchemen* are considered, the focus of the translation studies research, then does it mean that translation to be studied is only translation conducted by social agents carrying out interpersonal translation? Understanding translation's ectohomorous nature amongst other boundary phenomena poses questions that returns to the problem of commonsensical assumptions about the basic concepts such as *translation* and *translator* that translation and interpreting scholarship is puzzled by today.

The material of this analysis is historical and limited to a handful of cases, but many more examples both from the past and present could demonstrate when politicians and diplomats tried to act ectohomorously. Sometimes their attempts were successful, as was the case of American President John F. Kennedy using Latin and German in his famous 1963 West Berlin speech. In the middle of his speech in English, he said that in the ancient Roman world, one would proudly claim '*civis romanus sum*' – I am a Roman citizen. However, in his time, the 'proudest boast' was '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' – I am a Berliner.[48] Helped by his interpreter, Robert Lochner,[49] Kennedy was more successful than United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In 2009, she met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, and suggested to reset Russo-American relations by giving him as a gift a symbolic red button. But the inscription on the button read *peregruzka*, which in Russian means *overload* or *overcharge* instead of *perezagruzka* meaning *reset*.[50] Obviously, there was a lack of professional translation skills on Clinton's team. Thus, whilst endohomorous agents might decide to cross the boundary on their own – for whatever reasons and in whatever circumstances – they should remember that they are doing that at their own peril because acting ectohomorously is the privilege and responsibility of another social agent – translation/interpreting.

Notes

1. Niklas Luhmann [John Bednarz, Jr., translator, with Dirk Baecker], *Social Systems* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1995).

2. Sergey Tyulenev, *Applying Luhmann to Translation Studies* (NY, 2012).
3. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 1988); idem. [Eva M. Knodt, trans.], *Art as a Social System* (Stanford, CA, 2000); idem. [Kathleen Cross, trans.], *The Reality of the Mass Media* (Stanford, CA, 2000); idem. [Klaus A. Ziegert, translator], *Law as a Social System* (Oxford, 2004); idem. [David A. Brenner, translator, with Adrian Hermann], *A Systems Theory of Religion* (Stanford, CA, 2013); Gunter Runkel and Günter Burkart, eds., *Funktionssysteme der Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Systemtheorie von Niklas Luhmann* (Wiesbaden, 2005).
4. In this analysis, translation is understood as inter-lingual transfer, whilst diplomacy as inter-societal and political activity. Alternatively, diplomacy may also be conceptualised as a kind of intercultural translation. See Toby Osborne, "Translation, International Relations and Diplomacy," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, ed. Sue-Ann Harding and Ovidi Carbonell Cortés (London, 2018), 517–32. In the present discussion, translation is seen the (inter)lingual component of international diplomatic interactions similarly to how it is viewed an agent of power negotiations. See Federico Federici and Dario Tessicini, eds., *Translators, Interpreters, and Cultural Negotiators: Mediating and Communicating Power from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era* (Basingstoke, 2014); as a mechanism of cultural diplomacy, see Luise von Flotow, "Translation and Cultural Diplomacy," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, ed. Fruela Fernández and Jonathan Evans (London, 2018), 193–203.
5. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 197.
6. Tyulenev, *Applying Luhmann*, 146–57.
7. Sergey Tyulenev, "Translation and (Counter-)Intelligence: The Interpenetration of Social-Systemic Boundary Phenomena," *Perspectives* 29, no. 3 (2021): 339–53.
8. Elmer Plischke, *United States Diplomats and Their Missions: A Profile of American Diplomatic Emissaries since 1778* (Washington, DC, 1975), 35.
9. Martin S. Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East* (London, NY, 1996), 66.
10. *Ibid*.
11. Moolchand C. Saihgal, *Modern Hindi Grammar* (Subathu, 1958), front cover.
12. *Ibid*.
13. *Ibid*.
14. *Ibid*.
15. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie Contriued into Three Bookes: The First of Poets and Poesie, The Second of Proportion, the Third of Ornament* (London, 1589), 226. Hereinafter spelling and punctuation are original.
16. *Ibid*.
17. *Ibid*.
18. *Ibid*., 227.
19. *Ibid*.
20. *Ibid*.
21. *Ibid*.
22. *Ibid*.
23. *Ibid*., 227–8.
24. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 17.
25. *Ibid*., 29.
26. For example, Denise Merkle, Carol O'Sullivan, Luc van Doorslaer, and Michaela Wolf, eds., *The Power of the Pen: Translation and Censorship in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Vienna, 2010).

27. For example, André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting & the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London, NY, 1992).
28. Notably, in TIS following Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994).
29. That is to say, once again, no third space is created. The third space is one that does not belong to any of the interacting systems. Even in the case of two systems interacting via a mediating third system, the elements involved in this tripartite interaction will always belong to one of the three systems, never resulting in a space that would be attributable to one of the interacting systems.
30. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 68.
31. Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *The Last Dragoman: The Swedish Orientalist Johannes Kolmodin as Scholar, Activist and Diplomat* (Istanbul, 2006).
32. Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (London, 2004), 21–22.
33. Paker Saliha, "Turkish Tradition," in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London, 2009), 547–56.
34. Özdalga, *Last Dragoman*, 1.
35. Lewis, *Babel to Dragomans*, 25.
36. *Ibid*., 26.
37. *Ibid*., 26–32.
38. Bettany Hughes, *Istanbul: A Tale of Three Cities* (London, 2017), 455–61.
39. *Ibid*.; Saliha, "Turkish Tradition," 548.
40. See Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival*, 64–5.
41. Özdalga, *Last Dragoman*, 131.
42. *Ibid*., 140.
43. *Ibid*., 135.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid*., 139.
46. *Ibid*., 1.
47. Kaindl Klaus, "(Literary) Translator Studies: Shaping the Field," in *Literary Translator Studies*, ed. Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager (Amsterdam, 2021), 1–38.
48. '1963: Kennedy: "Ich bin ein Berliner"', *BBC News* (26 June 2005).
49. Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetzsche, *Found in Translation* (NY, 2012), 57–58.
50. *Ibid*., 52.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Sergey Tyulenev is Associate Professor in Translation Studies and the Director for Intercultural Mediation in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Durham University. His scholarly interests include translation theory, the history of translation in Russia, the sociology of translation as well as the epistemology of translation research. He is editor of the Routledge series *Introductions to Translation and Interpreting*. His major publications include *Applying Luhmann to Translation Studies* (2011), *Translation and the Westernization of Eighteenth-Century Russia* (2012), *Translation and Society: An Introduction* (2014), and *Translation in the Public Sphere* (2018).