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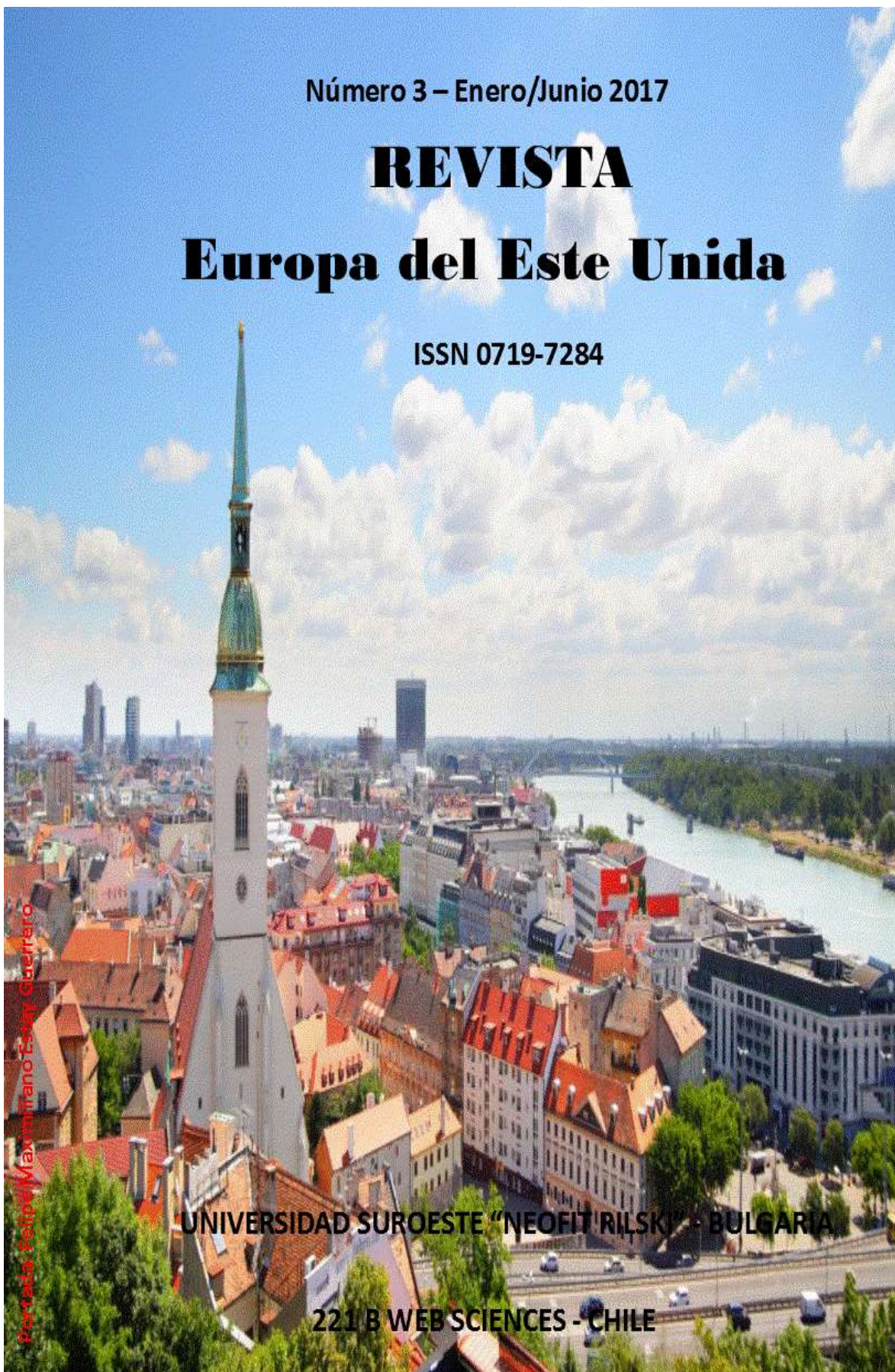
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**DIPLOMATIC RHETORICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
FROM THE E-MAIL TO THE TWEET**

COMUNICACIÓN RETÓRICA DIPLOMÁTICA EN LA ERA DIGITAL: DESDE EL E-MAIL AL TWEET

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Abstract

In the digital age that we live in, every aspect of the human life is transformed by the information and computer technologies. From the simple, everyday communication to the complex international relations, we monitor a rapid shift in the channel and the manner of communication. The current paper aims to review the channels and tools of the diplomatic communication and their specific rhetorical aspects. Diplomacy and rhetoric have a long mutual history and are interwoven as both have been described as a skill and as a practice since Antiquity until the modern era of digitalization and globalization.

Keywords

Diplomatic rhetoric – Virtual diplomatic rhetoric – Digital diplomacy – E-diplomacy – Twiplomacy

Resumen

En la era digital en la que vivimos, cada aspecto de la vida humana se transforma por la información y las tecnologías informáticas. Desde la comunicación sencilla y cotidiana hasta las complejas relaciones internacionales, monitorizamos un cambio rápido en el canal y la forma de comunicación. El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo revisar los canales y herramientas de la comunicación diplomática y sus aspectos retóricos específicos. La diplomacia y la retórica tienen una larga historia mutua y se entrelazan ya que ambos han sido descritos como una habilidad y una práctica desde la antigüedad hasta la era moderna de la digitalización y la globalización.

Palabras Claves

Retórica diplomática – Retórica diplomática virtual – Diplomacia digital – E-diplomacia – Twiplomacia

Introduction

Since ancient times, swords and words have been the main techniques to conduct international communications. If the sword strategy was failing, the eloquence stepped in to salvage the conflicts that different tribes and nations had to deal with. Since words were so important in ancient politics and for diplomacy, the first teachers in public speaking appeared in the lands of nowadays Turkey – the sophists – teachers of wisdom (Greek: *sophia*). They were the first travelling philosophers and teachers in rhetoric, but also, as very skilled masters of the art of speaking, sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, Prodicus and possibly also Thrasymachus acted as diplomatic representatives of their cities of origin¹. The available classifications of the rhetorical acts in the ancient times define the political and public affairs speeches as central for the free citizen of the Greek polis. One of the earliest classifications is given by Anaximenes, who differentiates two major groups of speeches – those in the court (forensic) and those in the assembly (deliberative)². Another classification is that of Plato, and presumably of Socrates, who defines three kind of speeches carried out: in the assembly; in the court, and what is new – the Socratic dialog, as a form of didactical tool for teaching. In *Rhetoric* Aristotle also defines three genres: deliberative (political), forensic (judicial), and epideictic (celebratory). “Current studies of rhetoric continue to draw inspiration from classical works, such as Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, and Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*.”³ Modern classifications continue to be based on the rhetorical situation and we find terms such as political speaking⁴, political oratory⁵, and political rhetoric⁶. The definition for political rhetoric given by Mavrodieva⁷ in her book *The political rhetoric in Bulgaria from the meetings to the web 2.0* is “rhetorical acts..., that aim at spreading political ideas, giving information about concepts, platforms, programs, decisions, during events and activities of the political parties, government institutions, international organizations, NGOs”. According to literature, the political rhetoric is a form of rhetorical practice that has been in the scholars’ attention since Antiquity and continues to sparkle interest in today’s digital world.

Diplomacy is the act of conducting the foreign policy of a country. It is also an official representation of the country in another country or international organization. As stated above, among the earliest diplomatic representatives were the philosophers – teachers of rhetoric (rhetors) and orators as well. Persuasion is one of the most significant functions of rhetoric, along with its tasks to inform, communicate and educate. Diplomacy utilizes the rhetorical art to achieve its goals – representation, negotiations, conflict resolution, peace, etc.

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, The Sophists. 09 septiembre de 2015. Retrieved from [www.plato.stanford.edu](https://plato.stanford.edu/): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sophists/#Pro>

² S. O'Rourke, Anaximenes, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*. In M. Ballif, & M. Moran (Eds.), *Classical Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Source* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Publishing Group., 2005), 19-23.

³ S. Condor; C. Tileaga & M. Billing, Political Rhetoric. In *Theoretical Approaches* (2013) 262-297. doi:Sears110213OUS.indd

⁴ J. Wilson, *Political speaking* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁵ G. Remer, *Political oratory and conversation*. *Political Theory*, (1999) 39-65.

⁶ As cited in Rumenev, *Rhetorical classifications*, 1994; Д. Александрова, Проблеми на реториката. София. 1985; G. Roque, *Political rhetoric in visual image*. In E. Weigand (Ed.), *Dialogue and rhetoric* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), 185-193 and И. Мавродијева, Политическата реторика в България от митингите до web 2.0 (1989 – 2012) (София: Парадигма, 2012).

⁷ И. Мавродијева, Политическата реторика в...

Diplomatic rhetoric

The diplomatic rhetoric is manifested through the modern diplomatic practice of countries and international organizations. The International legal act that guides and regulates this practice was created and signed in Vienna (1961) under the name Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Among the basic displays of the diplomatic rhetorical act are the following diplomatic practices:

- Speeches at international conferences, assemblies, meetings and gatherings;
- Speeches pronounced on diplomatic acts of signing agreements, conclusion of treaties, communiqués, etc.;
- Speeches during visits, receptions, ceremonies, etc.;
- Diplomatic correspondence.⁸

There are two distinguished main genres of the diplomatic rhetoric: verbal and written. Giving speeches, toasts and expressing positions as mentioned above, as well as the established practice of diplomatic correspondence that includes 1) letters: credentials (lettres de créance); recalls, etc.; 2) notes: verbale, speaking note (bout de papier), collective, identic, etc.; 3) memorandums; 4) statements; 5) business cards - a special and well accepted form of communication through exchanging cards for introduction or short messages.

Tightly connected to the diplomatic rhetorical acts are the diplomatic protocol, ceremonial and etiquette. These are set of rules and prescriptions on how to conduct the diplomatic rhetorical acts in order to maintain proper language, style, non-verbal behavior, spacial behavior, etc. Those guiding rules are not only important for the successful conduct of the rhetorical act, but also for building, maintaining and enhancing the image of the country represented by the diplomat – the country's ethos, but for the diplomat's ethos as well. As Aristotle prescribed that there are three ways to persuade – through logos (the words/knowledge); through pathos (emotions); and through ethos (the image and ethical behavior) of the orator⁹. Building and maintaining the personal image of a diplomat is crucial for establishing trust, authority and respect as a representative of a country and as a person, along with the core function of the diplomatic representative – to stand for the interests of their home country.

Diplomacy in the Digital Age

With the advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) more and more institutions and countries start to conduct diplomacy with the use of the new digital technologies. Web 1.0 was the first generation of the web, which was considered by its founder Berners-Lee to be "read-only web."¹⁰ That means only people with technical

⁸ Л. Мацько, Дипломатическое красноречие. In Л. Мацько, & О. Мацько, *Риторика*. Киев. 2003.

⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (Sofia: Publisher "Zahari Stoyanov", 2013).

¹⁰ T. Burners-Lee, The next web. (2009). Retrieved January 03, 2016, from Ted.com: https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_berners_lee_on_the_next_web

background and computer programming skills could be orators in the web – they can send a message. The rest could only search and read the information. The real boom in the information technologies spread for communication purposes was with the introduction of the next generation of the web in 2004 – Web 2.0. “Web 2.0 facilitates major properties like participatory, collaborative, and distributed practices which enable formal and in-formal spheres of daily activities on going on web.”¹¹ It was, what Tim O’Reilly described as “read-write web”¹². This technology allows for people without technical backgrounds to create and maintain websites, social platforms such as social networks and social media; to share different content – text, audio, video, and a combination of them – multimedia. The new digital technologies introduced by the Web 2.0 technologies were not immediately embraced by the governments and institutions. As Elizabeth Losh states in her book *Virtualpolitik*, officials were scared to some extent and tried to regulate the web instead of using it effectively to their advantage¹³.

Almost twenty years later, governments and organizations are building their image through websites, social networks and media profiles in order to communicate to the global community and their diasporas (communities) in foreign countries. In the United States of America, an office for e-diplomacy has been functioning since 2003¹⁴. Other terms used to describe the diplomatic practice in the virtual environment are electronic diplomacy (short for e-diplomacy), digital diplomacy, internet (net) diplomacy, and cyber diplomacy¹⁵. The term cyber diplomacy, however, has a slightly different connotation – “...the use of diplomatic tools, and the diplomatic mindset, to resolve issues arising in cyberspace.”¹⁶ The terms e-diplomacy, net diplomacy and digital diplomacy are perceived as a way to conduct diplomacy via the means of information and computer technologies.

Another case is that of Europe, where the foreign ministers use Twitter to communicate among one another, other politicians, officials, the nationals of their countries and the global community, practically with everyone that follows their account on Twitter. That use of the social network Twitter for diplomatic purposes could be called a ‘virtual diplomatic network’ and twiplomacy¹⁷. The term twiplomacy was coined by Berson-Marsteller in their study of the use of the social network and micro-blogging platform, Twitter by politicians. According to Sandre¹⁸, twiplomacy is only one of the tools available to e-diplomacy.

There is another, not that well-explained term – Facebook diplomacy. Similarly to the twiplomacy or the diplomacy in Twitter, Facebook diplomacy’s concept is in the use of

¹¹ N. Choudhury, *World Wide Web and Its Journey from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0*. *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technologies*, 5(6) (2014), 8096-8100.

¹² T. O’Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software*. *COMMUNICATIONS & STRATEGIES*, (2007) 17-36.

¹³ E. Losh, *Virtualpolitik* (MIT Press, 2009).

¹⁴ T. Xiaosong & L. Yanfang, *New Developments in the E-diplomacy of Western Countries and Their Implications for China*. *China International Studies*, (2012, January/february) 144-155.

¹⁵ C. Ipu, *E-diplomacy in East Africa: Case Study of Kenya* (Nairobi: Institute of Diplomacy and International Study to the University of Nairobi, 2013)

¹⁶ S. Riordan, *Cyber Diplomacy vs. Digital Diplomacy: A Terminological Distinction* (mayo 2016) Retrieved from USC Center on Public Diplomacy: <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org>

¹⁷ Berson-Marsteller, (2015). <http://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2015/#section-intro>. Retrieved from <http://twiplomacy.com/>: <http://twiplomacy.com/>

¹⁸ A. Sandre, *Twitter for Diplomats* (Geneva, Rome: Diplofoundation and Instituto Diplomatico, 2013).

the social network Facebook, as a channel of communication. Governments, ministries, embassies and consulates, as well as the politicians and ambassadors themselves, create their online presence in Facebook in order to conduct their diplomatic services.

All the terms that are related to diplomacy in the virtual space, e-diplomacy, digital diplomacy, net diplomacy, twiplomacy and Facebook diplomacy, could be grouped under the broader and well established term – public diplomacy. “Digital diplomacy evolved from public diplomacy, a form of the diplomatic practice, which has been defined as an “instrument used by states to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values”¹⁹. The way in which the Web 2.0 technologies enhanced the public diplomacy practices and communication channels and tools, led to the development of many sub-branches of the diplomacy in the virtual space.

Rhetorical Aspects of the Diplomacy in the Virtual Space

In 2013 Harris introduced the term diplomacy 2.0 to signify the vast possibilities granted by the Web 2.0 generation of the web and the social communication technologies. Similarly, we could suggest that during the era of the Web 1.0 from its creation to 2004, the diplomacy in the virtual space could only be called diplomacy 1.0. Since the Web 1.0 provided limited possibilities for communication by the end user of the Internet, the rhetorical genres, which were employed in the diplomatic practice, were also limited. The digital tools used to conduct diplomacy were mainly the official websites of the foreign office (ministry of foreign affairs) and the website of the representation (embassy), along with the introduction of the electronic letter (the e-mail). The websites provided official information of the ministry/embassy, positions, news, events, and hot issues information for their citizens in a foreign country. Another popular manifestation of the Web 1.0 technology was the webportals. Webportals are websites or webpages that contained hyperlinks group in different category. Popular web portals on diplomatic topics are <http://www.ediplomat.com>; <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr>; diplomatic portal of the Swedish government <http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-for-foreign-affairs/diplomatic-portal/>, etc.

The style of the website’s language and the e-mail correspondence remained strictly official and in any case the use of printed diplomatic correspondence was not diminished. The diplomatic communication was supplementary to the traditional rhetorical acts, employed by diplomats in line with their functions.

However, all changed with the spread of the new generation of Web 2.0 tools and the upgrade of the diplomacy 1.0 to diplomacy 2.0. “Diplomats rely on the Internet to find information, communicate with colleagues via e-mail, and negotiate draft texts in electronic format; diplomats are also increasingly using new social networking platforms such as blogs and Facebook”²⁰. With the introduction of the social networks and media, the diplomats have been enabled to use personal websites or/and blogs. For example, Gergana Passy (Grancharova), a former deputy-minister of foreign affairs (2004, 2005) and a minister of European affairs (2007-2009), was one of the first Bulgarian politicians

¹⁹ O. Adesina, Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy. Cogent Social Sciences, 2017, <https://www.cogentoa.com/>. Ccitando a Melissen (2013), 436.

²⁰ O. Adesina, Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy...

and ministers dealing with international relations to maintain a blog (<http://www.gerganapassy.eu/>). The blogs are a type of social media technology, a personal website and a digital diary, that has an easy interface and allows everyone, without having a technical background to create, maintain and communicate through blog posts.

Another type of diplomatic rhetorical act is the post in the social networks. As it has been already mentioned, a lot of institutions use Facebook and Twitter for diplomatic communication. Apart from the foreign ministers of the EU countries, the Papal state with the name of their official account @Pontifex, also uses Twitter. For the very first time the account was used by the Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote: “Dear friends, I am pleased to get in touch with you through Twitter. Thank you for your generous response. I bless all of you from my heart.” His successor Pope Francis was pronounced by the study of Burson-Marsteller “the most influential leader on Twitter” for 2015. According to the study, most European royal families also have their official Twitter account: the British royal court (@BritishMonarchy), the Belgian royal court (@MonarchieBe), the royal family of Luxemburg (@CourGrandDucal), the royal courts of the Netherlands (@KoninklijkHuis), Norway (@Kronprinsparet), Monaco (@PalaisMonaco), and the Spanish royal family (@CasaReal)²¹.

The American Embassy in Bulgaria maintains their online presence via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and a blog. On Facebook (U.S. Embassy Sofia) they share various types of content such as a text in combination with photos or videos, short videos, live streaming on Facebook, hyperlinks and hypertext in the form of #tags. They also share official information, newsletters and news via the option called notes. The only option that seems not to be used is that of polls. But it is available and could be used to check for the opinions of the community that follows the embassy on Facebook.

On their Twitter account (@usembassysofia) they share tweets with combinations of content: text and photos, and/or video/hyperlinks/hypertext, etc. The tweet posts are limited to 140 characters, and it requires mastery in order to put up an eye-catching and thought-provoking communication on Twitter.

The video content and messages, containing speeches, addresses, and important information, are primarily shared by the social media platform YouTube (SofiaPAO). The official images of events are communicated through their Flickr account (usembassysofia). The photos are curated in albums supplemented with a short written description.

The reviewed cases of technologies used for diplomatic communication allows for establishing a basic classification of the diplomatic rhetoric genres used in virtual environment (Figure 1):

²¹ Т. Симеонов, Туипломация: реторически аспекти на политическата комуникация в Туитър. Лятна школа по връзки с обществеността XVII (София: Нов Български университет, 2015).

Technology	Genre
Web 1.0	
Websites	Webpages with information
	Webportals containing links directing to webpages, dedicated to a topic
Electronic mails	E-letters, e-notes, e-invitations, etc.
Web 2.0	
Social media	Blog post
	Video message (YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, etc.)
	Photostreaming/Image gallery curation (Flickr, Instagram, etc.)
Social networks	Post; notes; live streaming; polls
	Microblogging posts – tweets (140 character only)

Figure 1
Genres of diplomatic rhetoric in virtual environment

Final thoughts

The current paper just touches on a topic that is not that well-researched and holds a potential for further studies, since the diplomatic and political rhetorical communication in the virtual space is used more and more. By initially using the websites and the e-mails, as Web 1.0, first generation of the WWW technologies, and later the whole range of social 2.0 technologies, diplomats utilize different tools for speedy, accurate and authentic communication with stakeholders across the globe.

The paper provides a review of the most common terms of the diplomatic communication conducted on the web, and agrees with other authors that these terms and practices are derived from the broader term – public diplomacy. A classification of the genres of the diplomatic rhetoric acts is also suggested based on the current review of literature, cases and a previous research²².

²² Т. Симеонов, Туипломация: реторически аспекти на политическата комуникация в Туитър. Лятна школа по връзки с обществеността XVII (София: Нов Български университет, 2015).

Future studies of the diplomatic rhetoric in the virtual space could benefit from a cyberethnographic approach of studying the diplomatic rhetorical acts and other communication practices in the virtual environment.

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