Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Profession of Translator in Africa

By Dr. Servais Martial Akpaca

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Abstract- In many African countries, for historical reasons, European languages including English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese are used in schools, churches, public and private institutions. Therefore, translation from and into these languages is frequently done during international conferences as well as for international organisations and projects located in the African region. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the opportunities and challenges of this linguistic situation for translators across Africa. So far, translation has played a major role in the progress of humanity and should continue to do so, especially in Africa, a continent that heavily depends on the wealth of knowledge and information available, especially, in English and in a few other languages. History reveals that medicine, which was originally practiced by the Arabs, was introduced through translation into Western universities in the 8th century. Nowadays, thanks to the globalisation process, translations are increasingly done by multinationals into many languages even in Africa.

The methodology of the paper is both descriptive and explanatory. The findings of the paper include the following challenges and opportunities: a limited number of institutions employ translators in Africa, therefore job opportunities are not plenty in this profession; translation studies fail to attract many students because of the limited number of opportunities provided by the labour market; there are few schools of translators in African countries; small corporations complain about the high cost of translations and expect every translator to excel in both their mother tongue and their second or third language instead of employing more than one translator; translators in Africa also play the role of terminologists because of the lack of terminology databases in most institutions; freelance translators find it difficult to cope with this situation, especially when their working relationship with these institutions date back to a recent past; the use of European languages is a challenge for many student translators and practising translators; there is a need for translators to have a noticeable web presence in order to attract clients from all over the world; they also need to create an instrument (i.e. a journal or a newsbulletin) to express their opinions and concerns; last but not least, national translators' associations need to register and effectively defend their members' interests.

Keywords: freelance translator, translation technology, market demands, africa, professional ethics.

I. Introduction

Translation has rendered valuable services to humanity from time immemorial. It not only disseminates knowledge from one language to another, but it also brings people together and promotes friendly relations and international understanding. Remember that from the 8th century, medicine was introduced to Western universities by the Arabs through translation. Toledo, the erstwhile capital city of Spain, became a "beehive of translation", i.e. a busy place where translations were done on a large scale. That is what Berschin (1986, pp. 163-168) recalls when he notes that:

> En effet, Tolède, la capitale de l'Espagne à l'époque, est devenue un centre de traduction à la suite de la conquête musulmane en 711. L'École de Traducteurs de Tolède a été créée au XIIème siècle par l'archevêque de Tolède: don Raimundo. À partir de la seconde moitié du Xème siècle, Huesca, Tarazona, León, Pampelune, Segovie et Barcelone ont suivi l'exemple. Tolède est devenue un centre culturel qui exportait le savoir à toute l'Europe chrétienne. Des traductions étaient effectuées de l'arabe au latin. Plus tard, au XIIIème siècle, Alphonse X dit Le Sage a continué à traduire des livres de philosophie, d'astronomie, de médecine, de littérature, etc., de l'arabe vers le grec, le castillan et le latin.

Indeed, this conference provides an opportunity to recall the contribution of translation to civilisation and to discuss practical aspects of the profession in Africa. It is a fact that the practice of this profession in Africa faces opportunities and challenges, which need to be discussed in a bid to improve translators' working conditions and status.

This paper shows that the demand for translation is increasing across the world, and Africa needs to find ways and means to get a share of the market. In other words, African translators need collective strategies to seize the opportunities available in the national, regional and international translation markets. To this end, issues pertaining to training and curriculum, regulating access to the profession, education of work providers, translation technology, official registration of translators' associations, tariffs, ethics, etc., are discussed.

The paper hinges on practical ideas developed by Gouadec (2007) and takes into account the current market trends highlighted by Victoria Nicol (2018). Aspects relating to translation technology, i.e. Neural Machine Translation and translation memories, are dealt with using papers published by Doucet (2022), Kook (2022), and Martikainen (2022). Professional aspects of the topic are discussed using the regulations of a number of translators' associations from Africa and overseas.

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The initial part of the paper presents the methodology which is mixed. Subsequently, the results are indicated. The last part of the paper discusses the findings and makes some recommendations.

II.   METHODOLOGY

This paper has used both quantitative and qualitative methods to describe the practice of the profession of freelance translator in Africa. A great proportion of the paper is made up of practical ideas developed by professional translators. Statistics and figures have been collected from publications by translation agencies and the United Nations.

The objective of the paper is to highlight the challenges and opportunities facing the profession of a translator in Africa in a bid to chart a way forward and highlight the main areas in which action needs to be taken to improve translators' status and working conditions.

The instruments used to carry out this research include the Internet, books, an interview, academic congress materials, and the regulations of translators' associations.

The data include statistics on global translation market share, the percentage of Neural Machine Translation and of Automatic Machine Translation in the global translation output, and the information obtained from translators' associations' regulations.

Assumptions are made regarding the future of the profession in connection with the advances in translation technology boosted by the development of artificial intelligence.

The variables in this research include Africa's share in the distribution of Global Language Services Market, the spread of the Internet, and the rate of CAT Tools usage by translators in Africa.

The outcomes of this research include but are not limited to the following results:

III.   RESULTS

3.1 The profession of a translator in most African countries needs to be regulated when it comes to issues pertaining to access to the profession, required qualifications, and tariffs.

3.2 African translators have no share in the global language services market.

3.3 African freelance translators need to team up and ensure an effective web presence to attract more clients at the national and international levels.

3.4 Mobility on the employment front is a fact because work opportunities come here and there.

3.5 The use of CAT Tools and Neural Machine Translation (NMT) has become necessary to increase productivity and keep pace with the rest of the work.

3.6 Translator training is an issue of main concern and translation curricula should include topics such as language and linguistics, website translations, medical/healthcare translations, e-commerce, finance, legal services, manufacturing industry, business, e-learning programmes/online certifications, media, collaborations tools, software translation and localisation, marketing, advertising, PR.

IV.   DISCUSSION

a)   *An Overview of a Translator's Job*

In presenting an overview of the translator's job, Gouadec (2007, p.13) mentions three stages in the translation process:

The activities involved in providing a translation service are organised into three phases: 1. Pre-translation; 2. Translation; 3. Post-translation.

Pre-translation includes anything that takes place up to the moment the translator actually receives the material for translation: everything that has to do with getting the job, writing out estimates, negotiating, getting the specifications right, and contracting.

As far as the pre-translation phase is concerned, the translator does job hunting by calling and visiting companies and institutions likely to employ translators. It is recommended to drop a curriculum vitae and to insist to see a senior officer including the Human Resources Officer or any officer in charge of (local) purchase orders and contracts. Physical contact is particularly important because it can make a difference if the translator is articulate, well-dressed, and gives a good impression of himself or herself. The knowledge of the service provision rates applied in several local companies and institutions is equally important because most of the time, the officers provide some information on their companies' official rates. If the rates are lower than the market rates, there is always room for bargaining. Job hunting should be done vigorously and continuously.

There is also a need to constantly look for calls for tender in newspapers and on websites. Examples of international websites providing information on job opportunities include cDiscussion.com, ProZ.com, Gengo.com, OneHourTranslation.com, Unbabel.com, TextMaster.com, TranslatorsCafe.com, and jobs.ilo.org. In countries where there are translators' associations, the members normally share information on job opportunities. Finally, when a translator gets a call or an e-mail from a prospective client for work, s/he should make sure that a contract is duly signed with the work provider. The contract normally specifies the number of pages or words to be translated, the price, and the delivery date.

When the work provider sends the translation kit to the translator, the translation stage begins. On this score, Gouadec (2007) indicates that:

Translation in turn is divided into three stages: 1. Pre-transfer; 2. Transfer; 3. Post-transfer.

Pre-transfer includes all operations leading up to the actual 'translating', including preparation of the material, documentary searches, alignment, memory consolidation, terminology mining, deciding on options, etc. The transfer is the well-known core activity of shifting to another language-culture combination; Post-transfer covers anything that has to be done to meet the quality requirements and criteria before delivery of the translated material. It mostly pertains to quality control and upgrading. It also includes formatting and various preparations for delivery. (Ibid)

Indeed, the translator analyses the material, clarifies ambiguities, and retrieves necessary information including dictionaries, memories, templates, and terminology databases. S/he is free to get back to the work provider to ask important questions regarding company terminology and policy documents. Existing publications in both source language and target language are very helpful. It is important to visit the company's website if there is one. It is equally important to relate to a contact person in the company that can provide some useful information on the company's policies, procedures, terminology, and others. Depending on the size and nature of every material, the translator can even train on specific aspects of the work. When the translation is completed, it is imperative to proofread and revise it.

At the post-translation stage, the finished translation is validated. Thereafter, it is formatted, integrated, or embedded and set up on a relevant medium. Furthermore, the need to operate and update a translation memory cannot be overemphasized. After delivering the translation, the translator follows up on the payment after issuing a bill.

Post-translation covers all activities that follow the delivery of the translated material. These include possible integration of the translated material (as in the simulation of subtitles, layout prior to publishing, integration in a Web site or an international soundtrack, etc.) but also, of course, all the "administrative" business of getting paid, setting up an archive of the project, consolidating the terminology for future uses, and much more. (Ibid)

Some work providers give feedback on the quality of translated materials. This is a welcome development that enables the translator to take note of the company's remarks on the errors found in the translation. These remarks are most of the time related to issues pertaining to terminology, interpretation, acronyms, etc. Indeed, when I was working for the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) in Nairobi, Kenya as a consultant, the Secretary-General instructed the secretariat to always show me all the corrections made in my translations to ensure that the same errors were not repeated in subsequent translations.

After this overview of the translator's job, Gouadec describes freelance translators.

b) *Freelance translators*

Gouadec (2007) describes freelance translators as follows:

Freelance translators, or so-called 'independent' translators, are self-employed, meaning they are not in any legal sense 'bound' to their clients or work providers. They either work for 'direct' clients (whom they invoice directly) or for agencies (or brokerage firms) that actually get the contracts and subcontract them to the freelancers. (Ibid, p. 99)

Furthermore, he states that freelance translators are expected to pay all mandatory taxes and social security contributions. However, in several African countries, many self-employed professionals and informal sector workers do not pay taxes because the income tax policies are lax and most of these workers are not registered. In several countries, especially in West Africa, some freelance translators manage to avoid taxes by refraining from opening translation bureaux. Given that they are very mobile because of the nature of their work, tax offices find it difficult to spot them. Having said that, there are bona fide translators and interpreters who do pay taxes even if they fail to declare all their incomes. In any case, it is important to stress that health insurance and occupational pension schemes are vital matters that every freelance translator needs to subscribe to. On this same score, Gouadec explains that freelance translators enter into voluntary contractual relationships with their clients. In some African countries, there is no actual legal framework for freelancing and individual translators as well as the few existing translators' associations are not registered. However, some translators' associations are making an effort to register and claim status for their members.

Some of the opportunities of the profession include flexibility and the freedom to decide the working hours and places.

By contrast, the challenges include uncertain and irregular income, fierce competition, the tendency of some translators to charge very low tariffs, unfamiliarity with their clients' terminology and policies, especially at the beginning of the working relationship, etc. A freelance translator confessed one day at the end of a five-day conference that he had no social security scheme. Therefore, he normally spent most of the money he earned during conferences to buy plots of land hoping that in the future, the plots would generate enough income to sustain his life. It is a bet. In this particular case, it may be recommended to subscribe to a national social security and pension scheme even though in some countries private social security schemes are rather problematic. Given that freelance translators are very mobile, whenever they decide to terminate or transfer the schemes to another country, they lose a lot of money.

In mentioning another challenge facing freelance translators, one of them said that sometimes, he did not get any work for more than six months and tended to forget that he had a profession. This situation of inactivity was exacerbated particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic characterised by lockdowns and company closures. In addition, freelancing is not a viable activity in several African cities where businesses and diplomatic activities are scarce.

The next issue to be discussed is the prerequisites and conditions for becoming a freelance translator.

c) Prerequisites and conditions

As far as the prerequisites are concerned, Gouadec (2007) notes that from an administrative and legal point of view, in most counties, everybody can work as a professional translator. People come to translation from two opposing sectors, i.e. the language sector and the world of industry and technique. Those coming from the language sector are linguists, while those from the world of industry have a commercial, legal, accounting, engineering, or any other technical background. This is the background of translators in France.

In West Africa, some translators have a linguistic, legal or economic background. Technical translators are very few. This is probably due to the labour market which provides few translation opportunities in the technical areas. Unlike France, which is a developed and industrialised country, west African countries do not have enough industries to provide technical translations. At Université Lumière Lyon 2 where I trained in France, for example, students specialise in medical translation because there are many chemical laboratories and medical research institutes in that country.

At this stage, an issue of particular importance is the need to regulate access to the profession. Regarding this issue, the following questions were put to François, a freelance translator in Cotonou:

What are some of the challenges facing freelance translators in Benin and in the West African sub-region?

Answer:

Lack of qualified translators and interpreters. Many people with linguistic backgrounds enter the profession with a BA and compete with us. Somebody needs to regulate access to the profession.

Some translators offer very low tariffs because they want to get all the contracts everywhere. It is important for registered translators' associations (if any) to fix the tariffs.

Is there a bright future for this profession in West Africa?

Answer:

It is not easy to predict what the future has in store for us. Translation technologies may take our jobs away. In addition, many companies and institutions employ Bilingual Executive Secretaries who perform many functions including translation.

What advice do you have to give people practicing this profession in Africa as a whole?

Answer:

Freelance translators need professionalism and a sense of ethics. As far as professionalism is concerned, it is important to stress that in every profession there must be rules. One of the rules is the need to avoid applying very low tariffs. Another one is the need to be humble and meet the clients' expectations in terms of quality and deadline.

François has raised important questions related to the need to regulate the profession by checking the credentials of translators. Can somebody who has a BA in English or French call himself a translator? This is a question an assembly like AITCO can address. The opinion of my own association, i.e. ATRAD – Association des Traducteurs Diplômés du Bénin – is that to qualify as a translator, you need to have at least a MA in Translation Studies. This is both a policy and a legal issue.

On this same issue, the following is the position of the Ghana Association of Translators and Interpreters.

Articles of Association

Chapter One

Status, Membership, and Objectives

Article 2: Membership

Membership of the Association shall be open to qualified Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian Translators and Interpreters.

Categories of Membership

Membership of the Association shall be open to the following categories of Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian Translators and Interpreters:

1. *Honorary members:* Shall have contributed, or have the capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of the profession;

2. *Full members:* Shall have at least one of the minimum qualifications listed below, plus at least three years of working experience, and be approved by the vetting committee:

(a) Bachelor's degree or Diploma in Translation and/or Conference Interpreting from a recognised training institution.

(b) Bachelor's degree in any Modern Language with three years' proven experience, and vetted by the Vetting Committee.

3. *Associate members:* Shall have a minimum qualification of a first degree in any academic discipline with any two international languages and

be recommended by three full members and vetted by the vetting committee. Members in this category shall not hold office. (2017, p.2)

In a similar vein, Gouadec says that good translators should share the following qualities and competencies:

1. Absolutely perfect mastery of the languages used, and especially the target language;
2. Multi-cultural competence, either by upbringing or by education – 'culture' being meant here to include culture in its widest sense, but also technical culture, business culture, corporate culture, etc.
3. Perfect familiarity with the domains they specialise in (either through their initial education and training, or – more probably – through self-tuition;
4. An absolute knowledge of what translation means, what it requires, and what it implies;
5. No interest in proving that they are better translators than the next person: they are simply interested in doing their job as professionally as possible. (p. 150).

Indeed, a competent translator must have a good command of his or her working languages and should be familiar with several cultures. Translation is not only a lexical transfer but it is also a cultural transfer. The knowledge of the cultural realities of the target language is critically important. A translator who does not know the cultural realities of the target language is not likely to do an accurate job. Of course, this is a functionalist approach to translation. An example of cultural realities in translation was given by Kpogue (2021) in her MA Dissertation entitled: ETUDE DES POSSIBILITES DE TRADUCTION DES TERMES ET LEXIES TIRES DES ACTES DE L'ETAT CIVIL ET DES DIPLOMES. In this dissertation, she describes the plight of a translator who was requested by two students to translate into English a degree called Baccalauréat. One of the students was traveling to Ghana to further his studies while the other one was going to attend a tertiary education programme in South Africa. The translator used the term A'Levels as an equivalent of Baccalauréat in both cases. This was a mistake because the National Senior Certificate seems to be the best equivalent of Baccalauréat in the South African educational system, while the West African Senior Secondary Certificate of Examination (WASSCE) seems to be the best equivalent of Baccalauréat in Ghana (Kpoguè 2020, p.41). As we all know, A' Levels are a college or sixth form leaving qualification offered in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As a result, the terms used in the various countries are different and the translator should be aware of these. Therefore, there is a need for translators to have multicultural competence.

The question of specialisation is equally important in translation. Quite often, freelance translators move from one conference to another though the issues discussed in these conferences are different and technical. Given that most conferences are attended by experts who make presentations on scientific and technical topics and issues, it is necessary for translators to specialise and/or read widely on these issues to understand the technical terms and concepts. Having said that, it is important to note that in the African context, a translator who sticks to his or her area of specialisation may not earn enough money. Given that the industries are not developed in most African countries, they are unlikely to provide enough opportunities to translators who decide to work exclusively in these industries.

Should translators work alone or in a team whether they specialise or not?

Working alone or in a team

A translator working alone receives the document, carries out research on key terms, concepts, and phraseology, translates, and revises it. This situation is prevalent in many small companies in Africa where there is only one translator who translates from and into two languages. The translator is both a reviser and a self-reviser. This means that s/he revises translations done by independent translators and revises his or her own translations. It is not an ideal situation because errors may find their way in the translations but the translator may not see them. Translation is teamwork.

Gouadec notes that "Teamwork is now gradually becoming the norm in translation companies and is also becoming more widespread among freelance translator networks." (Ibid, p. 106) The author uses the term 'Assembly-line translation' to refer to a situation where various tasks and functions are allotted to different specialist operators including someone who is in charge of preparing the document (separating text from code, extracting the terminology, extracting the graphics, etc.), a terminologist and phraseologist, a translator, an information supplier (who supplies the scientific and technical language-specific information), a keyboard operator, proof-readers and quality controllers, testers and someone who is in charge of readying the document for delivery or publication.

Another issue of importance is what it takes to set up shop as a freelance translator.

Setting up shop as a freelance translator

The materials and equipment listed by Gouadec to start freelance translators off include a comfortable or ergonomic seat, phone, scanner, computer, dedicated hard disc for backup, sound equipment, software that reads PDF files, software for word counts and invoicing, search engines, backup Internet access providers, spreadsheets, http://www.google.com/google-d-s/tour1.html highly recommended to create and share online glossaries, a database management software, a firewall and anti-virus, a software for file zipping and unzipping,

full CAT software (translation memory, terminology management, tag editing, aligner), Web page editors, a terminology-mining tool, a terminology-management software, a project-management software and a personal portal from which to link with useful sites.

After setting up shop as a freelancer, what invoicing modes are suggested?

d) Invoicing modes

Gouadec suggests that translators charge their clients on a word count basis, an hourly or per diem basis depending on how the clients are used to being charged. Alternative suggestions made by the author include levying a minimum flat rate service charge for any translation, working out the cost on the basis of specific rates for all the different operations or tasks in the overall translation process (documentation, terminography, quality checks, layout, etc.), counting as additional work any task undertaken over and above those related to the translation process proper (e.g. correcting the source material, having another translator proof-read the translation, aligning texts and translations, setting up a translation memory, etc.).

Some work providers pay a flat rate per page. The point is that some pages are full while others are almost empty. Organisations such as ECOWAS, ITUC-Africa, and BOAD used to have a fixed rate that they paid per page.

While the average cost of professional translation services can range as low as $0.08 to $0.28 per word, the final cost will be based on the number of services required for the project.

Below are the UN daily rates for free-lance translators, effective 1 July 2020, based on the 2013 CEB/AITC Agreement.

Daily Rates as of 01/07/2020 (in US Dollars)

Daily Rates in US Dollars

UN Rate/Step	World	
	With social security	No social security
T-1/P-1/1	309	293
T-2/P-2/1	391	370
T-3/P-3/1	471	447
T-4/P-4/1	569	539
T-5/P-5/1	682	646

This UN daily rate should be a reference for all translators and employers in Africa.

Equally important in this discussion is the issue of translation technology.

e) Translation technology

i. *CAT Tools*

Nowadays translation involves the use of technologies such as word processing, desktop-publishing software, translation memory management systems, search engines, computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, text aligners, Web site design tools, Web editors, and many more.

Gouadec says that translators need to be familiar with different computer environments and platforms and their resumes should mention several skills with a list of IT tools and techniques.

In addition to the traditional translation softwares and translation memories such as TRADOS, memoQ, and Concordance, Neural Machine Translation (NMT) has been developed since 2017 in collaboration with Google. NMT has drastically improved the quality, syntax, fluency, and accuracy of machine translation. It translates at high speed and is user-friendly. It uses an artificial neural network, i.e. artificial intelligence. No human intervention is needed in NMT.

In connection with this technological breakthrough, Isabelle Doucet of Université Laval in Canada published a paper titled « Quelle place pour le numérique dans la formation en traduction? » in nouvelles.ulaval.ca on May 19th, 2022. In this paper, she poses the following critical question on neural machine translation:

Est-ce que l'IA mettra les spécialistes de la traduction au chômage? Doit-on initier les futurs traducteurs aux outils numériques dès leurs premières années de formation? Ces questions au cœur du colloque La formation en traduction à l'ère du numérique, tenu dans le cadre du 89e Congrès de l'Acfas, sont cruciales. Car des technologies comme la traduction automatique neuronale (TAN) font maintenant partie intégrante du marché et ne disparaîtront pas de sitôt.

It emerges from this quotation that neural machine translation is here to stay and there is a need to train students in the area of translation technologies from the very first years.

Other papers presented at the colloquium include:

– « Former les futur(e)s traducteurs/trices à la traduction automatique: pourquoi, quand et comment ? » by Rudy Look of Université de Lille, France. In this paper, Look discusses several issues including the introduction of Machine Translation and Neural Machine Translation in translators training curricula, the use of translation technologies by students when they do their homework and assignments, and the development of future translation professionals' MT literacy.

– « Apprivoiser l'outil technologique grâce à l'apprentissage expérientiel » by Hanna Martikainen (École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT), Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3). This presentation focuses on collaborative learning in the area of machine translation and post-editing, the difference between translated texts and post-edited texts and feeding a translation engine with new terms.

On the question of CAT Tools, Sega Faye, chairman of the Senegalse Translators' Association (ASTRA) gave his opinion in a newspaper article published in La Gazette on December 16-23, 2021.

L'intelligence artificielle ne menace-t-elle pas le métier de traducteur ?

La traduction est avant tout une activité humaine, un acte de communication humaine qui requiert la présence de l'homme en amont et en aval du processus.

Le traducteur moderne ne voit pas les outils informatiques comme une menace mais plutôt comme un atout incomparable dont il doit savoir se servir. En effet, un bon traducteur doit savoir manier les outils d'aide à la traduction.

Comme leur nom l'indique, ils aident le traducteur dans l'exécution de son projet, mais c'est le traducteur qui effectue le travail de traduction.

Ces outils sont plutôt des mémoires de traduction qui stockent les traductions déjà faites et les mettent à la disposition du traducteur chaque fois que celui-ci en fait la demande. L'intérêt est qu'il y a une harmonisation de la terminologie pour le client et que le traducteur passe moins de temps sur un projet qui présente des similarités avec un projet précédent.

C'est là toute la différence entre un traducteur formé et un traducteur non formé : savoir utiliser ces outils à bon escient. C'est pourquoi toutes les formations modernes dans ce domaine prévoient des modules sur l'utilisation des outils d'aide à la traduction

These are various academic and professional opinions on the use of translation technology in this digital era.

On this same issue, Victoria Nicol, the founder of My Language Connection Ltd (MLC), explains that previously, machine translation systems used software to first translate, and a human translator works on the result and manually fixes all the errors. However, the current conversation about Machine Translation is centered on adopting a hybrid solution, where both human translators and software work simultaneously on translation projects to produce excellent translations. This is essentially the future of Machine translation post-editing (MTPE) services. In 2020, Statistical Machine Translation (SMT) alone contributed to more than 65% of the overall global translation market revenue. Concerning business usage of machine translation, CSA Research in 2020 found that the percentage of projects for end-clients using machine translations climbed from 13% in 2019 to 24% in 2020.

Having said that, Nicol thinks that machine translation has a bad reputation for poor accuracy and lack of localisation. Her answer to the following question: "Are businesses able to get the same quality from Machine translation output as they would with a professional, human linguist?" is that Machine translation quality remains flawed and significantly inferior to any professional human linguist. (My Language Connection, London office, e-mail: london@ mylanguageconnection.com – London, England).

Translation technologies include not only the above-mentioned tools but also the world wide web.

ii. *Web presence*

Translators need to be present on the world wide web because the world has become a global village. What this means for translators is that they may live in Benin or Kenya and attract clients from any country in the world. Indeed, some translators have blogs that enable them to market themselves and to work from a distance.

This is another area where African translators need to show a strong presence. Highly powered and qualified translators need to get together to develop websites in order to attract work providers from overseas. This is necessary because currently, the share of Africa in the international translation services market is nil.

iii. *The impact of information technology*

Gouadec stresses that information technology is creating a rift between those who can use it and those who are not. More specifically, some translators just use the basic combination of 'word processor + translation memory + terminology management system + Internet', while others go the extra mile to offer more elaborate services and process specific types of materials and media, by using more sophisticated software systems (including subtitling applications, localisation applications, translation project management systems). The latter make more money and are in a much better position to keep up with the pace of technological advances.

Looking back at a more or less recent past when translators used pen and paper and later on computers to do their work, it is obvious that the advent of the Internet, translation memories and Neural Machine Translation has drastically enhanced productivity, accuracy, and translators' visibility.

Although the developments in translation technology have drastically enhanced productivity, Africa is lagging behind in the distribution of the global language services market.

Translation market and demands

According to Nicol, the 'Distribution of Global Language Services Market' by region in June 2018 is as follows:

Europe	49.3%
North America	39.41%
Asia-Pacific	11.01%
Latin America & Caribbean	
Africa	
0% 1% 20% 30% 40% 50%	

Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/190486/global-language-services-market-share-by-continent/

The lesson that these figures teach us is that Africa has currently no share in the global language services market. This is due to several reasons, including the lack of major companies and the absence of African businesses in the process of globalisation. The few institutions and companies that employ some translators and provide work to freelance translators include government ministries, especially the ministries of Foreign Affairs, development projects, international conferences, few regional and international banks.

More specifically in the West African region, the national, regional, and international institutions employing translators include NGOs, ministries, development projects, UN agencies, EBID (bank), WAEMU, BCEAO (bank), AfDB (bank), and quite recently the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), however, the latter is a nascent organisation.

The implications of these social, economic, and professional realities are that African translators need to look beyond national borders. Mobility on the employment front, networking, and an effective web presence should be envisaged. The main question is: how do we get a share of the international translation market?

Furthermore, Nicol indicates that the translation industry is one of few global industries to experience continued growth despite the harsh impact of the pandemic hitting in 2020 and continuing to cause disruption throughout 2021. According to her, there is a growing demand for translation services industry in the following areas: website translations, medical/healthcare translations, e-commerce, finance, legal services, manufacturing industry, business, e-learning programmes/online certifications, media, collaborations tools, software translation and localisation, marketing, advertising, PR.

These are indications that translator trainers need to take into account and incorporate into translation curricula.

Apart from curricular issues, work provider education should also be part of freelance translators' agenda.

Educating the work provider

Gouadec states that work providers need to be educated because some of them do not know how complex the translation process is. They think that translation is just a matter of knowing languages; they feel it takes far too long and is terribly expensive.

Indeed, work providers have many wrong assumptions about translation. One day, a work provider, a female manager in a large company, said that if she knew that translation paid so well, she would have trained to become a translator instead.

Below is a series of advice given to freelancers by Gouadec to educate work providers:

– Demonstrate that translation is, in fact, a complex process, by identifying and explaining the different stages,
– show, through an example, how any important translation requires no end of checking and counter-checking,
– explain how long each stage in the translation process takes, and why,
– stop using word count as the basis for estimates and invoices, and opt for a set rate or an hourly or daily rate (as in other standard business practices),
– refuse to lower rates, by arguing that basic costs and overheads cannot be reduced,
– refuse to be underpaid for any translation work, on any grounds whatsoever,
– use a simple but useful battery of ordinary business instruments (i.e. delivery forms, quality control forms, standard agreements, general conditions of sale, etc.) to show that translation is just as serious as any other business. (op cit, p. 221)

Work providers' education and professional ethics should go hand in hand.

Professional ethics

Gouadec, the author of Translation as a Profession, proposes the following basic rules:

Professional translators shall: (1) never undertake any action or engage in any practice liable to throw the profession or professionals into disrepute; (2) always show respect for other people and their opinions, especially when writing to mailing lists and Web forums; (3) always comply with the laws and regulations relating to tax and social security or other mandatory contributions in force at the place of work; (4) always make available and use all resources needed to carry out the agreed or contractual tasks in compliance with the required standards;(5) never knowingly cheat a

client (in particular, by concealing the fact that a source document is already available in translation); (6) always resist any attempt to restrict their intellectual freedom and any pressures designed to make them knowingly produce a deliberately distorted, or inaccurate, or misleading translation; (6) be prepared to admit full liability for any deficiencies, errors or failings in the translation, unless such deficiencies, errors or failings be the result of deficiencies, errors or failings in the source material, or of failure on the part of the work provider to carry out his contractual or commonly accepted obligations or duties.

V. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities facing the profession of translator in Africa. It has noted among other things that challenges include the need to regulate the profession and to strive to get a share of the global language services market. The new translation technologies are both a challenge and an opportunity.

Translation brings people together, promotes international understanding, and disseminates knowledge. Humanity has immensely benefited from the fruits of translation. However, in Africa, there are not many recognised schools of translators.

African freelance translators need to work together to overcome the current challenges and those lying ahead. This discussion needs to be carried on in forthcoming papers.

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