

Contribution of teachers of translation in promoting the public recognition of the translation profession in Burundi

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Abstract: Translation plays a vital role in communication without having to learn a foreign language. It also paves the way for knowledge dissemination between people from different cultural backgrounds. However, the translation profession is still little recognized in Burundi. This article attempts to appraise the role of lecturers of translation at university in the development of the translation profession in Burundi. Tseng's model of professionalisation and the theory of control are two theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. Questionnaires were administered to translation lecturers at the undergraduate level. The data collected were therefore analysed using Microsoft Excel. Results indicated that the translation profession is unknown in Burundi. The findings also revealed that lecturers of translation at universities do not act as a role model in promoting public recognition of the translation profession. This research finally recommends that all stakeholders in the translation profession should establish a body regulatory to regulate translation practices on the market.

Keywords: Assessment, Lecturers, Professionalisation, Public recognition, Translation profession

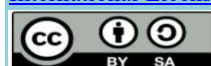
Biographical notes: Irankeje Fiacre obtained B.Ed. in French from Burundi Higher Institute of Education and an MA in Transborder Languages and Intercultural Communication from the Pan African University of Translation, Interpreting and Transborder Languages and Intercultural Communication programmes-PAUTRAIN- hosted by Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters-ASTI- and the University of Buea in Cameroon. His areas of interests are translation, interpretation, didactics, and sociolinguistics. He is an active member of the Research Centre of Didactics of Disciplines and Dissemination of Sciences of the University of Burundi. He presently teaches translation and interpretation at Bujumbura Christian University, and Kiswahili at the University of Burundi. He is also a freelance translator for different international organizations.

1. Introduction

Interlocutors use the media of communication for various purposes such as information, entertainment, messages, announcements, and advertisements (Terfa & Margaret, 2021:35). People from different societies have different cultures. The translation is a bridge of communication. It eases mutual understanding. Language is an important ineluctable element of society (Torkuma, 2022:16). People should therefore be well informed about the role of translation in a multilingual and multicultural setting. Burundi is a linguistically homogenous country. Burundians fluently speak Kirundi, the national language of the country. However, during the colonial period, two other languages penetrated Burundi namely Kiswahili which is still mostly used in urban areas, and French which is considered a language of prestige for Burundian elites (Irakoze, 2015: 29). Besides, English was introduced later in education, especially in high schools, as a subject of study for strategic reasons.

Colonisation and globalisation significantly influenced the ways of communication and understanding between people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the country. According to Ngorwanubusa (2013), the language of the ruling power, French, became the main medium of communication in administration and the teaching medium in schools after the First World War. The author adds that French was adopted as an official language of the country along with Kirundi-the national language just a few days after independence. Kiswahili, the lingua franca of East Africa, became the language of interest in 2007 when Burundi joined the East African Community (EAC) (Bigirimana, 2020). The integration of Burundi into the East Africa Community in 2007 resulted in an increase in the

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movement of people and goods in the country, specifically in Bujumbura City. Since then, English and Kiswahili became compulsory subjects in primary and high schools as well as in public and private Universities.

Due to the factors, above-mentioned, translation activities are essential to facilitate communication. There is always a need of translating documents for communication in public administration, diplomacy, private companies, humanitarian sectors, and Non-Governmental Organizations. However, the translation profession in Burundi is still unknown due to various obstacles. The lack of professional and qualified lecturers in translation is one of the barriers to the translation profession in the country. Furthermore, the lack of a translation job market and social perception towards translation impede the translation profession in Burundi. Thus, the translation profession is still maturing in Burundi. This diagnosis of the translation profession presents ample room for improvement and promotion by local key stakeholders in the business of translation. This article consequently intends to evaluate the role of translation lecturers and public recognition of the translation profession in Burundi.

2. Literature review

The status of the translation profession refers according to this study to the social or professional position of a person or thing in relation to their society. The definition denotes the social perception of a profession in relation to other professions. Society still has various perceptions and classifications of things although the law might have prescribed the operation measures of an object (Nisbett & Masuda, 2003). The perceptions towards the translation profession vary according to culture. Factors that determine the social perception of a given profession include the culture in place, the importance, or the role the profession plays in that society, the earnings and prestige (Treiman, 2013). Generally, it is on these factors that professions are classified in society.

When people's roles in each society or group are not well defined and understood, there is disorganization, misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, and conflict (Ibom, 2013:34). This statement underpins the study in the way it opens decision-makers eyes on the inconsistencies in the practice of the translation profession in a given society. The theory of control (Tseng, 1992: 20) which is a professionalisation theory underpins this study. The theory of control is adopted to examine how translators exert power in their profession.

The theory of control hence looks at how the occupation relates to other components of the labour market and institutions in society. Proponents of the theory of control argue that the more control practitioners of occupation are able to exert over the substance of their work, the more professionalization, the more occupation (Mikkelson, 2013: 3). Tseng notes that the theory of control views professions in terms of the amount of power they wield, and that professionalization is a collective effort rather than an individual one (Tseng, 1992: 20). The control theory underscores the importance of practitioners' input in setting the standards of the occupation. In fact, the study will help translation practitioners and academics understand the contribution of translation lecturers in Burundi in promoting the translation profession in Burundi.

3. Research methodology

This research is an exploratory study, which is articulated around both quantitative and qualitative. The first phase of this study was data collection through questionnaires distributed to translation teachers at the University in Burundi. The second phase of qualitative data collection was done through interviews considering data collected in the first phase through questionnaires.

Lecturers of translation at the undergraduate level constitute the sample population of this study. Questionnaires were administered to ten (10) teachers of translation at a university in Burundi. This study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The first sample technique was used to map out translation teachers at the university. The research also used snowballing which is the process of identifying subjects through referrals. Questionnaires were distributed to lecturers of translation because they are considered translation experts. They also know the nitty-gritty of the translation profession in Burundi.

4. Findings and discussions

This section analyses translation lecturers' responses collected using questionnaires and interviews.

4.1. Data collected using questionnaires

In order to investigate the contribution of translation teachers at the undergraduate level in promoting the translation profession in Burundi, a series of questions on indicators of their contribution has been addressed to respondents. Tables are used to present data.

4.1.1. Forum of translation scholars in Burundi

Concerning the existence of forums for teachers of translation, the data below (Table 1) shows that 10 out of 10 (100% of respondents) teachers of translation confirmed that forums for Burundian translation scholars do not exist.

Table 1: Existence of a forum of translation scholars in Burundi

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No	10	100

4.1.2. Publication of translation by teachers

On the question about publications done by teachers of translation in Burundi, the table below indicates that 10 teachers, 100% of respondents confirmed that they have never published articles on translation.

Table 2: Publications by teachers of translation in the domain

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No	10	100

4.1.3. Public promotion of the translation profession

Table 3 indicates that 4 teachers representing 40% of respondents, confirmed that they had been invited to speak about translation while 6, 60% chose No.

Table 3: Public promotion of the translation profession by teachers of translation

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No.	6	60
Yes	4	40
Total	10	100

4.1.4. Teachers’ workshop on translation

Table 4 evidently shows that 10 teachers representing 100% of respondents have never initiated a workshop to talk about translation to the public.

Table 4: Initiation of workshops by translation teachers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No	10	100

4.1.5. Forum of translation for students

Concerning the question of investigating the contribution of teachers of translation at university in promoting the translation profession by establishing learning forums on campuses, 100% of respondents indicated that they have never tried it (table 5).

Table 5: Initiating a translation forum for students at the undergraduate level

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No	10	100

4.2. Presentation of data from interviews

Interviews were held in the form of conversations with translation teachers at the university in Burundi. The order of interview questions was followed during the interview, though the interviewer allowed interviewees to express themselves freely after each question. Interviews were put in order of research questions to facilitate the presentation of data and their interpretations.

Note: ‘I’ stands for ‘Interviewee’ and the sign ‘x’ means that the interviewee has answered the question.

4.2.1. Training aspect of the translation profession

Regarding the training aspect of the translation profession in Burundi, interviewees expressed themselves on the relevance of curricula of the translation programmes where they teach, the use of CAT tools in classroom practice, and the qualification of teachers who teach in the programmes. From table 6, all interviewees confirmed that the curricula of those translation programmes are well designed, the objectives well set, and the contents well developed. Most interviewees assured that the curricula are relevant and can help students meet the professional requirements of the translation profession if they are fully exploited. Concerning the use of CAT tools in classroom practice, interviewees mentioned that they don’t use CAT tools in classroom practice due to the economic conditions of students who cannot afford to buy computers. They noted that they teach the use of CAT tools in theory by giving students examples and demonstrating with the teacher’s computer. Regarding the qualification of teachers, all interviewees confirmed that few of them, less than 10% are qualified to teach translation or have received full training in the translation field.

Table 6: Points of view of teachers on the training aspect of the translation profession in Burundi

Views from translation teachers on the translation programme they teach in, considering the curricula, use of CAT tools and qualification of teachers						
Interviewee response	Interviewees					Total
	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	
The curricula are well designed, objectives are well set, and contents well developed.	x	x	X	x	X	5
It is almost only theoretical. Only a few students can afford to buy computers.	x	x	X	x	X	5
Only ten percent (10%) of teachers are trained translators.	x	x	X	x	X	5

4.2.2. Regulation aspect of the translation profession

According to the interviewees (table 7), there is no institution in charge of controlling the practice of the translation profession in Burundi. They also indicated that there is no known association of translators in Burundi. Besides, there are no specific admission criteria for the profession. They mentioned that as there is no known institution regulating translation practice, managers of translation centres usually hire people with a degree in languages or language-related fields and those who master French, English, and Swahili in some cases.

Table 7: Regulation aspect of the translation profession in Burundi

Opinions of teachers of translation on the regulation of the practice of the translation profession in Burundi in terms of authoritative body controlling the practice of translation, existence of translators' association and the admission criteria into the profession.						
Interviewee response	Interviewees					Total
	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	
There is no institution in charge of controlling the practice of the translation profession in Burundi.	x	x	x	X	X	5
There isn't a known association of translators in Burundi.	x	x	x	X	X	5
There are no admission criteria; most of the translation companies employ people with a degree in languages or language-related fields and those who master French, English, and Swahili in some cases.	x	x	x	X	X	5

5. Discussion

This part of the study covers the discussion of data collected on the contribution of teachers of translation to the development of the translation profession in Burundi. Findings on the contribution of teachers of translation to the development of the translation profession are startling. Apart from delivering lectures in class, instructors of translation contribute little to the development of the translation profession. Findings show that translation teachers do not have a forum where they discuss issues of the translation profession in Burundi. Among 10 respondents, none of them has published a single article on translation. Findings also indicated that no single teacher has initiated a workshop or a translation club to raise awareness of the translation profession in general in Burundi specifically. The results reassure that translation teachers are not contributing to the development of the translation profession in Burundi.

The aspect of contribution of teachers to the public recognition of the translation profession in Burundi was viewed through the lenses of the theory of control. Tseng (1992:20) observes that professionalisation is a collective rather than an individual effort. In the case of teachers of translation in Burundi, the collective effort cannot be achieved under the present situation. There is no public forum for teachers to discuss relevant theoretical and practical issues in the translation profession.

A regulatory body provides better organisation and a platform for discussion ensures the promotion of the translation profession. Tseng's model (1992: 20) prescribes training and the establishment of a regulatory body as steps towards the better organisation of an occupation. Findings revealed that the translation profession in Burundi is far from reaching this stage since the training does not have the required tools to prepare students to meet professional requirements.

Tseng's model (1992: 42-44) stipulates that at an advanced stage, a profession can convince the public to accept its code of ethics. In this study, it was observed that it is far from reaching this stage because practitioners work almost on an individual basis.

Translators in Burundi do not have an association that can organise the work internally to establish traits that can be applied across the board. As a result, translation practice in the country is not considered a full-fledged profession. The findings revealed that the translation profession in Burundi is unrecognised and not valorised.

6. Implications of the study

The aspect of contribution of teachers to the public recognition of the translation profession in Burundi was viewed through the lenses of the theory of control. Tseng (1992: 20) indicates that professionalisation is a collective rather than an individual effort. The researcher realised that translation teachers in Burundi are neither getting together to share ideas about the translation profession issues in Burundi nor calling upon people to empower them about the translation profession.

It can be therefore noted that teachers' contribution to the promotion of public recognition of the translation profession in Burundi is still low. This comes to refute the hypothesis that translation teachers are contributing to the public recognition of the translation profession in the country.

Tseng's model (1992: 20) prescribes training and the establishment of a regulatory body as steps towards the better organisation of an occupation. Findings show that the translation profession in Burundi is far from reaching this stage since the training does not have the required tools to prepare students to meet professional requirements. There is not also regulatory body to control the market.

Translation is viewed in Burundi as a profession that lacks a solid core. It is also considered a transitory job. Translators do not have an association that can organise the work internally to establish traits that can be applied across the board. As a result, translation practice in Burundi is not considered a full-fledged profession. These facts confirm that the translation profession in Burundi is still unknown.

Findings from questionnaires and interviews were analysed in relation to indicators of experts in translation profession. From the analysis guided by mainly Tseng's model, the translation profession in Burundi turns out to be unrecognized and not valorised.

7. Recommendations

Teachers play a significant role in the development of socio-professional sector. This research finally recommends translation lecturers to take a leading role in promoting the profession by organising workshops and conferences and publishing books. The initiative will contribute to increasing the literature and increasing knowledge of the ethics of translation.

8. Conclusion

Regional integration and globalization have made Burundi a multi-linguistic sphere. Language services became more needed than before including translation in order to ease communication. As translation activities increased the market responded to the available demand by creating translation companies. The translation profession is still maturing in Burundi and a lot remains to be done to promote the profession and conduct relevant research that tackles contemporary theoretical and practical issues encountered by local practitioners. The profession of translation is not yet recognised in Burundi until nobody can consider it a profession like other sources of income. The research aims to investigate the contribution of lecturers of translation in promoting the translation profession in Burundi.

This study studiously analysed the contribution of teachers of translation in promoting the translation profession in Burundi. To achieve a better understanding of the focus of the study, Tseng's model and control theory of professionalisation were discussed in the literature review.

The research further shows that there is neither a professional association of translators nor an institution regulating the translation profession in the country. In addition, translators in Burundi should establish a code of ethics of their profession. The translation is not considered a full-fledged profession in the country, as confirmed by most respondents and interviewees.

This research is essential to the translation profession in Burundi. Though the translation profession has been investigated around the world, each country has its specificities. This study explored the translation profession in Burundi and bridges the gap of lack of literature on the status of the translation profession in Burundi. This study also allows decision-making institutions to know where the contribution is needed most. Moreover, given that there is still scanty literature on the profession, this study contributes significantly to knowledge in the field of the profession of translation. The findings of this study are useful to all stakeholders in the translation profession in Burundi since it has brought to light and made available and accessible facts about the profession.

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