THE TRANSLATION PROFESSION IN CAMEROON TODAY: FOCUS ON STATUS AND IDENTITY

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Abstract:

The present study identifies, describes and examines the mechanisms by which the status and identity of translators are defined and assessed in Cameroon. The study describes the current challenges of the profession and efforts towards establishing a professional status for translators in Cameroon in a bid to propose some possible solutions to improve the status quo. The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires using a purposive sample of translation stakeholders in Cameroon. The study specifically solicited translators' opinions on how they rate themselves, how they are treated in the various institutions where they work, and most especially, if there is any legal framework that defines them, their role, their rights and obligations. The study posits that the translation profession in Cameroon constitutes an entity of practice that is sufficiently stable to be identified, defined and delimited from other professions. There are, however, numerous administrative, educational, social and financial challenges facing the translation profession in Cameroon. Despite the numerous educational efforts made to enhance the professionalization of this activity in Cameroon, an analysis of legal instruments demonstrates an overwhelming lack of official commitment to improve this sector. Drawing its insight from the theory of professions of Brorström (2008), the study suggests that these inconsistencies should not be considered a serious hindrance to the development of translation in general and to the legitimate fulfilment of the translator in a bilingual Cameroon. The proposed solutions for improving the current situation have been discussed in the light of relevant literature in the domain.

Keywords: status, prestige, working conditions, job satisfaction, professional translators

1. Introduction

According to Ruokonen (2013), the translator status, as central as it is to translation, has been grievously neglected in translation research. The paucity of research is reflected in the fact that translator status only recently received an entry in a handbook of translation research (Katan 2011). However, the importance of the translator in the translation profession in general and the translation process in particular, cannot be overemphasized. As key actors in the

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development of culture and the preservation of unity among peoples, their role and place in the society deserve to be understood.

Translators, in the daily performance of their work live in and relate with a complex whole called the society. In order to facilitate intercultural communication in today's multilingual and multicultural communities, they make use of the various competences they have acquired over the years as members of society. As such, the society in which they live is a key determinant, directly or indirectly, of their general output. For this reason, it is essential for translators, for those who hire their services and for the society as a whole to know the role that is ascribed to these professionals. This knowledge creates a platform for the smooth running of the different professional activities in general and that of the translator in particular. Stark (1998: 228) explains that *"people whose status is inconsistent, or higher on one dimension than on another, will be more frustrated and dissatisfied than people with consistent statuses will be"*. Moreover, Robinson (in Leech 1997: 11) presents the need to study translators as follows: *"It should go without saying: not only are translators' social beings, just by virtue of being human; their social existence is crucial to their professional lives"*.

A major proponent of status inconsistency theory, Lenski (in Stark 1998:229) explains the process this way: studying how translators perceive the value, respect or prestige accorded to their profession hardly leads to direct improvements in the working environment:

> *"When people rank higher on one status dimension than on another, they will emphasize their highest claim to rank and de-emphasize their lowest. Thus, in presenting themselves to others, they will expect to be judged according to their highest status. Others, however, in seeking to maximize their own position, will tend to respond to them according to their lowest status. Persons who are denied the social rank that they believe they deserve become antagonistic toward the rules governing status in their society. Consequently, persons suffering from status inconsistency will favour political actions aimed against upper-status groups; that is, they will support liberal and radical parties and proposals. In other words, the proper definition of people's statuses is a prerequisite to having an organized and a harmonious society."*

Status perceptions and the factors linked to them are thus relevant to translators' professional well-being and to translation practice. Is the translator's status in Cameroon clearly defined and respected? Are translators in Cameroon aware of their status? If yes, how many and which category? Do the employers of translators know the translator's status? Those translators who know their status are satisfied with the description.

This study aims to examine the translator's status (definition, protection, remuneration…); demonstrate that many translators are not aware of their status; prove that there are inconsistencies as far as the translator's status in Cameroon is concerned; solicit to know how translators are perceived in our society (by themselves and others), and identify the problems caused by these perceptions; as well as, investigate possible solutions to these problems.

2. Literature Review

Status has become a major topic within sociologically oriented translation research, but the concept itself remains ambiguous. The status of a profession: fulfilling the criteria of a specialized and protected occupation that is highly valued by society (Volti, 2008: 97-102). Translation is often considered a semi-profession that fails to meet all such criteria (e.g. Sela-Sheffy, 2006, 2016). According to Gentile (1916), a glance at the current studies on the topic revealed that translation, like interpretation, is a semi-profession, which is defined as an occupation possessing only a few features of fully-fledged professions but is not sufficiently autonomous to be sociologically classified as such. Although some of them are attributed a certain degree of social esteem, semi-professions *"exert power over other occupations, clients and the state, but achieve this to a 175 lesser degree than a profession"* (Van Teijlingen, 2000: 101). Particularly, Shlesinger (2011: 3) advanced the hypothesis that:

> *"Translators and interpreters are an extreme example of an understudied semi-professional group. Among other occupational groups that are under-professionalized or marginalized – such as school teachers, nurses or craft-artists – translators and interpreters serve as a case for examining how a group deals with its marginality."*

This section of the study examines the four major parts of this study, which include the definition, types and theories of status, authors' contributions to status definition, legal framework instruments, and the translator's status from a cross-occupational perspective.

2.1 Defining status and delimiting the scope of this study
According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Compass* (7th edition), the noun ''status'' is a late 18th century legal term which comes from the word ''stare'' in Latin, literally meaning standing, to stand. The word as it is used today has been attributed several meanings.

2.1.1 Status as the official legal position or condition of a person, group or country
This is the first meaning of the word status. It involves the law. As such, legal instruments established by a country, a society or a group are the first elements that are taken into consideration. "Condition" here is defined as the situation in which people live or work as provided by the law. It speaks of the good or bad state of a given thing. As far as the current topic is concerned, the word "condition" refers specifically to the organization and the working conditions of translators in their various societies.

2.1.2 Status as the social or professional position of a person or thing in relation to others
This definition refers to the social perception of a particular profession in relation to other professions. Even though the law may have prescribed the way a particular object should operate, society has its way of perceiving and classifying things. The reasons for these perceptions vary according to culture. Factors that determine the social perception of a given profession include the culture in place, the importance and the role the profession plays in

society, as well as its earnings and prestige. Generally, it is in consideration of these factors that professions are classified in a particular society.

2.1.3 Status as importance or prestige

Some occupations appear to be more prestigious than others. Caplow (1954: 52) classified prestigious professions using the following scales:

a) **The degree of responsibility.** A professional whose responsibilities affect people's lives has a higher prestige than one whose responsibilities only affect property. As such, the higher the responsibility, the higher the prestige.

b) **The nature of work.** The kind of work that involves the manipulation of symbols only is of a higher status than the one that involves the manipulation of tools and materials. For example, the mathematician is considered of a higher status than the welder.

c) **Formal education.** A profession requiring a higher education certificate has a higher prestige than one which requires no formal education.

d) **Training.** Long training denotes higher prestige.

e) **Authority.** A professional who has a large group of subordinates under him is said to have a higher prestige than one who has just assistants and helpers or no subordinates at all.

f) **Class attributes.** Conventional upper-class occupations have a higher prestige than those of the conventional lower class.

g) **Income.** High income is tantamount to high prestige.

2.1.4 Status as the situation of something at a particular time

The time factor is involved in the study of status. As such, status is situated within a particular frame of time. This equally means that status changes with time. As people change, their status changes, too. However, the word ''status'' should not be confused with ''statute'', which is a formerly written document established by the law. It is also a formal rule of an institution or organization.

2.2 Types of status

Broadly, there exist two categories of status: ascribed and achieved statuses.

2.2.1 Ascribed status

It is a position assigned to individuals or groups without regard for merit but because of certain traits beyond their control, such as race, sex or parental social standing.

2.2.2 Achieved status

It is a position gained on the basis of merit, that is, by achievement. The word status is also perceived according to the culture, norms, rules and regulations governing a given region or society. These main types have subtypes, which include:

a) Economic status

It is the position occupied by a person in the economic sector, which is the role he plays in production and the income level. It is generally expressed by two words: wealthy or poor.

b) Professional status

It falls under the economic status because as a professional, one is a producer of a given service and resource. However, under this type, emphasis is laid on the fact that those operating in a given field must have undergone a training, the profession is recognised by legal instruments (local and international); whereas in the economic status, one must not have undergone a formal training before being an economic actor.

c) Social status

It is the position occupied by a person or a group of people in the society. In sociology or anthropology, social status is the honour or prestige attached to one's position in society (one's social position). It may also refer to a rank or position that one holds in a group, for example, son or daughter, playmate, pupil, etc.

d) Marital status

Marital status refers to the lawful recognition of the agreement between a man and a woman to be husband and wife. It describes the person's condition as far as matrimony is concerned. Generally, there are married, single, divorced, and widowed individuals.

e) Educational status

It refers to the level and kind of education one has received in a lifetime. It also refers to school enrolment and performance, as well as the illiteracy rate in a given society.

f) Religious status

It refers to the belief system one adheres to. Such belief systems include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.

g) Health status

The level of health of the individual, group, or population is subjectively assessed by the individual or by more objective measures. The health status of an individual or a group is usually measured in terms of the absence of physical pain, physical disability, or a condition that is likely to cause death, emotional well-being, and satisfactory social functioning.

Summarily, the status of a person or thing in a given society relies entirely on the perception of that person or thing by both legal institutions and other groups or members of that society. This work focuses on the professional status of the translator, which includes both the legal framework and the social perception. In other words, the work looks at the legal framework that governs the practice of translation in general, the position and working conditions of translators in particular, and how translators perceive themselves. The status of individuals and groups falls under the domain of social sciences. How is status perceived by social scientists?

2.3 Status in social sciences

Status has also been used and explained in social sciences when it comes to studying the various strata or groups of society. Social scientists define status as any position within the stratification system (Stark, 1998:228). Thus, a particular status or position can be high or low depending on the property, prestige, or power (or all three) associated with that position. Dion (1984 :451) defines status as:

> « *Position sociale qu'une personne possède dans la structure d'un groupe concret avec la consideration dont elle jouit de la part de l'entourage. Une personne possède autant de statuts particuliers que de groupes auxquels elle appartient. [The social position someone has in the structure of a concrete group with the way he/she is considered by those in that group. The number of specific statuses an individual has is directly proportionate to the number of groups to which that individual belongs*]" (My translation)

This is to say that there can be as many statuses as the number of groups to which people belong. Therefore, an individual may have several statuses at the same time. For example, a man may have as professional status as a lawyer, as economic status rich, as marital status married. The present study reviews research on status as social ranking, i.e., perceptions of prestige attached to translation as a profession.

2.4 Theories on status: personal and group versus high and low status

In all cases, academics are awarding translators creative, managerial and specialist roles, which almost automatically results in calls for the end of the invisibility of the translator. As Christina Schaffner (2000: 9) notes "*The new impetus which has come to Translation Studies is the focus on culture as being linked to notions of power, asymmetries, difference and identity.*" This study, however, seeks to investigate to what extent the academic theories and beliefs are reflected in the workplace and the extent to which the "new impetus" or indeed any impetus from translation studies, has made an impact on the profession.

With regards to the argument on status, some authors believe that a status is determined by who an individual is, what he was born to be, while others believe that status is determined by the label one receives in a given society, his achievements, the prestige and the sense of belonging to a particular group. In other words, some believe in personal status and others believe in group status. Such is the case with Bensman and Rosenberg (1963: 149), who argue that "*one's certitude in the sequence of status positions occupied by an individual reinforces his sense of belonging and reaffirms his identity in an orderly society*". According to them, status is equated to the rights, prestige and duties of an individual. They uphold the fact that each profession has its values, aspirations, virtues and satisfaction; therefore, professions should not be generalized as a whole. Each profession has to be recognized at its own value. They also added that "*Belonging to a social category or group is a source of self-esteem; therefore, belonging to a low-status group would motivate a search for individual mobility, cognitive creativity and social competition*".

This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why many translators are involved in professional roles other than translation. What may be alarming in this case is that a higher educational status has been achieved, but the rights and privileges accompanying it are not present. In relation to group perception, Brook (2006: 82) says *"Public recognition of one's worth and value is a powerful motivator for some"*. Every member of society belonging to a particular group desires to be recognized in order to find fulfillment in what he does. After discussing about status, it is imperative to see how the translators' status is perceived by translation scholars.

2.5 The translator's status from authors' perspectives

Baker (2001) offers an overview of the national histories of translation and interpretation in some linguistic and cultural communities in different parts of the world. In the course of narrating the different stages of the evolution of translation, mention is made, in some cases, of the role and status of translators. The authors describe how the latter were perceived in their countries and the problems they faced as professionals. In very few cases, solutions were attempted to address those problems. A reading of the text shows that the problems faced by translators vary according to their various cultures, that is, according to how they are perceived in their societies. Translators and interpreters seem to have historically belonged to minority groups of one type or the other. However, this is not the case in all the countries.

In some parts of the world, translators and interpreters are highly regarded and earn a very respectable living. Delisle (1995), on his part, focuses entirely on the translator by studying the cultural, linguistic and political roles the latter has played throughout history in different parts of the world. The different roles include: inventors of alphabets, builders of national languages and literatures, distributors of knowledge, players in the political scenes of several countries, propagators of different types of religions, importers of cultural values, writers of dictionaries and witnesses of history. However, the authors do not mention how translators began to be perceived by their various societies as a result of their contributions.

One of the authors who contributed enormously to translation, both as a discipline and as a profession, is Venuti (1995: 14), who refers to 'invisibility' with regard to the situation and activities of the translator. He talks about the condition of the translator as related to both linguistic and cultural factors. Even though the book does not focus entirely on the translator's perception in a given culture, it gives an overview of how the translator is perceived in the Anglo-American culture. According to him, translators in these societies have a shadowy existence and an unfavorable legal status both in copyright law and in actual contractual arrangements. Given the fact that the translator has been defined by international legal instruments as an author, one of the contributors (Trak, 1998) in the encyclopedia argues that any sense of authorial presence in a translation is an illusion, an effect of transparent discourse, comparable to a ''stunt'', but the translator participates in a ''psychological'' relationship with the author in which he represses his own ''personality''. In other words, according to these authors, a translator is not actually an author; he simply assists authors in sharing their works with other cultures.

There arises the question of the perception of the translator right from the definition attributed to him. Leech (2005), who drew her inspiration from Venuti (1995), carried out an investigative study into the extent to which people know the work and role of translators, describing the way the latter are perceived in their societies. According to the study, there is a lack of understanding and appreciation of translators in today's society; this situation is damaging the professional translator and the industry as a whole. The author proceeds by showing that there has not been any empirical research on this subject. He describes the role and contributions of translators throughout history and carries out a field survey on members of the public, professional translators and language students. The result showed that not only was there a general lack of knowledge about the translator's status, but the profession was also poorly rated compared to other professions. The author looked at the problem areas and proposed some solutions and recommendations.

On the other hand, Pym (2000) exposes the fact that, more often than not, translators are simply associated with translation. In a bid to answer the question ''how do translators live'', Pym argues that translators are people with multiple aims, loyalties and activities. But in most countries, they are perceived as intermediaries and effective power is more consistently held by the better-defined social groups. The author goes on to argue that translation is essentially based on culture, and that intercultural communication in translation is determined by two factors: first of all, the degree of the translator's professional status, and the ''secondness'' of inter culture, in the sense that a culture is felt to be secondary to a division of cultures, and the line between cultures should be operative for there to be a need for transfer. If the translator's professional status is the first factor that determines this transfer of cultures, then it is worth giving it considerable attention.

Garcia (2005) reflects on the effects of globalization on translation teaching. Following a summary of the academic, theoretical, and professional aspects of contemporary translation – aspects that are judged to be in a crisis situation – the position of translation training in a global society is analyzed, one in which new technology plays a fundamental role. The globalization dilemma demands a change in methodology and a profound debate concerning the consequences and risks of the new reality. Far from perceiving this reality as negative or as a threat to the world of translation, it is seen as both a challenge and a necessary objective. Here, the author speaks about the different avenues that globalization has opened to the domain of translation, but in order to have a healthy professional practice, these avenues should be well-defined and organized beginning from the training.

Mikkelson (1999) discusses the place of economic, political and cultural exchange without which, at this present time, no country can succeed. This view corroborates that of an author who says, "*no man is an island*". This, therefore, justifies the global network that is being set among all peoples. More than ever before, the translator is called to play an indispensable role in this global network, which is usually referred to as the Global Village, without which this concept will not be operationalized. Moreover, the author highlights the technological changes that have occurred in the world in general and in the translation and interpreting professions, which have both positive and negative effects on the translator's status. For illustration purposes, one of the positive effects is that these changes will open up more opportunities for translators and one of the negative effects is that some languages will be

more used at the detriment of others. The author equally raises the issue of trained versus untrained translators/interpreters and the job market. She calls on users of translators' services to make a difference between a trained and an untrained person in the field and gives the trained professional the worth he/she deserves. As such, translator status is found in a melting pot of the job market that seldom makes the difference between the professional and the non-professional.

Cameroonian scholars have also contributed to the domain of translation, both at academic and professional levels. Nama (1990), after outlining the origin of the name ''Cameroon'', language and linguistic groups in Cameroon, identifies, describes and evaluates the major works done by translators during the pre-colonial, missionary, colonial and post-colonial eras. Throughout these periods, we see how the translator evolved from being a natural translator to a religious, cultural, technical, literary and administrative one. Translators played the role of bridge between, on the one hand, different ethnic groups in Cameroon and, on the other, Cameroon and Western countries. Because of new terminologies from western cultures, our own languages were bound to expand, and this could only be done through the creativity and adaptation skills of translators.

Most of the translators who pioneered the profession in Cameroon were both locals and foreigners. Philanthropic organizations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) also played a major role in the evolution of the profession by translating the Bible into more than 25 Cameroonian languages. The content of the article is more geared towards major actors in the evolution of translation and interpretation in Cameroon, how they translated (the process), names of their works, but little or no attention is paid to the translator's status, neither in the past nor in the present time.

Moreover, Bessong (2009) argues that the present economic crisis faced by Cameroon has had a very negative impact on many professions in general and on translators and interpreters in particular. As a result of this, many translators and interpreters are leaving the country for better opportunities. According to this author, the political conditions of liberality and democratization have instead aggravated the phenomenon. After outlining the different stages (offices/functions) based on presidential decrees translators have passed through in the administration of our country, Bessong concludes that there is a general decline in the status of the translator/interpreter from both the powers that be and the other users of their services. As a result, within the profession of the translator/interpreter, there is no job satisfaction as was the case during the early years of independence.

The author equally highlights the aspects of education and recruitment in the public services, and from the three modes of recruitment that were mentioned in Decree No 75/770, only one mode is respected (professional competitive examination) as of now; as such, on the one hand, there are translators/interpreters who have no proof of professional training from within or out of the country, but who are considered as professionals and occupy different positions of responsibility in the public service. Meanwhile, on the other hand, there are trained individuals who are not officially employed by the government.

Also, a comparative analysis between translation/interpretation and other professional bodies (youth and sport or animation; public health and social affairs; post and telecommunication, mines and geology, civil engineering and general administration) carried

out by Ndeffo (2009) concluded that the translation profession was the only one whose category and function were not clearly defined. Normally, translators and interpreters are supposed to play the role of chiefs of services, directors and supervisors, as stated in the Public Service General Status, but this is not being applied. Moreover, the same author thinks that translators and interpreters are simply considered in relation to their activity. That is what he said: "*En effet, le statut particulier du corps des traducteurs/interprètes les cantonne à la traduction et l'interprétation des documents officiels.*" The special status of translators and interpreters confines them to the translation and interpretation of official documents] (My translation). In other words, the author, in the course of his findings, realized that the rights and privileges of translators are not looked into. What most users are concerned about is the final work (translations) they can produce. The present study intends to critically investigate the underlying causes of the inconsistencies brought forth by Bessong with a special emphasis on the role of translators themselves have played in improving their professional status.

One of the main groups that have equally brought up questions related to the condition of translators is the Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters of Cameroon (APTIC). In one of their occasional papers (Vol. II N 002, February 2022), they raised many issues concerning the practice of translation in Cameroon. First of all, at a speech delivered by the then Deputy Secretary General of APTIC, Nzo-Nguty Bernard Tarkang, suggestions were made concerning the development of the profession in Cameroon. They include investing in better training for talented youths aspiring to be translators and interpreters, refresher courses for already employed staff and the provision of indispensable working tools.

Also, APTIC Quarterly Newsletter is a forum where different translators express themselves on issues concerning their profession. In N 003 of April 26 2003, one of the writers (Tarkang) asserts that our country is facing a dilemma as far as the objectives towards bilingualism are concerned. Despite the numerous attempts through decrees, instructions and the setting up of training institutions, the State's translation needs have not been met. The cause of this dilemma, according to the authors, is a failure on the part of the Cameroon Government *"to recognize the rightful position of the real custodians of the bicultural component of Cameroon"* who are translators and interpreters. "…*They continue to be seen, both by State authorities in crucial decision-making positions and the rest of the citizens, as workers in the Ant's Kingdom, as executing officer's incapable of any managerial or executive positions…"*. According to them, translators raise other professionals to higher positions through their work, but they remain in the background, unnoticed and unthought-of. Moreover, they lack basic working tools and feel marginalized. Therefore, as a solution to these various problems, Tarkang advocates the setting up of a ministry in charge of translation, bilingualism and language policy.

From the above submissions, it is obvious that translators are professionals on their own; they have rights, privileges, duties and obligations. Given the nature of their job, which is, promoting understanding and co-operation among cultures and nations, their role is assimilated to that of authors, and as such, they enjoy the same protection as them. However, the application of these provisions takes different forms in various societies. The nature of the government, the number of languages, the culture, the department in charge of linguistic services, and the translation market differ from one country to another. While these criteria

are well defined, organized and advanced in some countries, it is not the case in others. As such, a rapid survey of translator status around the world was carried out. It is important to note that the translator's status around the world can only be studied alongside the evolution and changes in the translation industry.

As mentioned above, there is no detailed work that talks about the translator's status exclusively. Therefore, to obtain any information on translators' status as perceived officially, we looked at how the United Nations perceives the translator.

2.6 Some international instruments

There are official instruments that have defined the translator's status across the world. The main instruments which are the embodiment, representative of all nations is the United Nations in general and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in particular. Here is the legal status of translators as defined by the UN.

2.6.1 The Berne Convention

The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works was signed by 164 contracting parties, including all European countries. Article 2 stipulates that "*Translations, adaptations, arrangements of music and other alterations of a literary or artistic work shall be protected as original works without prejudice to the copyright in the original work.*" The same Article defines the scope of the Convention: "*The expression "literary and artistic works" shall include every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever may be the mode or form of its expression.*" In practice this means that not just translations of 'high literature' enjoy copyright protection, but all translations that bear the stamp of their author, including works of nonfiction. It is known that the value attached to the translator's work reflects, to some extent, the value that is attached to the translator himself. By value here, is meant the importance of the work as directly related to the translator and not to the user.

2.6.2 The UNESCO's Nairobi Recommendation

The general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was held in Nairobi from 26 October to 30 November 1976. The Recommendation gives individual states, as well as actors in the field, a concrete set of norms regarding translators' legal position, remuneration, contracts, social and fiscal situation, as well as training and working conditions. The key principle was that translators should be afforded the same protection afforded to writers. This recommendation is not binding in the legal sense, but the mere fact that it has been adopted by the General Conference entails obligations even for those member states that neither voted for it nor approved it. It provides a strong legal and moral framework for national organizations defending translators' rights.

However, these provisions are differently applied in various countries. For this reason, a cross-country analysis of the translator's status was carried out by studying the organization of the translation industry, the role of translators, and the market trends and problems faced by translators. All these factors have a direct influence on the translator and a significant impact on the translator's status and working conditions. The American Translators Association (ATA) administers an accreditation programme involving written examinations

in 14 language pairs, offers advice on financial deals, and organizes an annual conference. Among many others, there is the ALT (American Literary Translators), which organizes an annual conference and administers translation awards. It also publishes a journal, Translation Review, which, apart from articles on translation theory, features interviews with translators, reports on publishers' translation policies, and reviews of translations.

The Translation Committee of the PEN American Center in New York issues a model of contracts that reflects the latest copyright law, conducts a ''Translation Watch'' that reproves publishers, periodical editors, and reviewers when translators are not credited in books and reviews, and organizes readings and events to bring translation and foreign literature to public attention. In summary, the general translation market is described as being in crisis as a result of the economic recession. However, individual translators are involved in:

- Advertising translation: translate advertisements for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc. likewise a very demanding discipline because of the creative work involved.
- Television translators: translate mainly television plays, but also documentary programs.
- Sworn translation: translate documents for official or legal purposes.

Moreover, the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) is a professional association for language practice professionals in South Africa. Membership is open to all translators, interpreters, editors, proof-readers, text reviewers, terminologists, copywriters and anyone else involved in the language practice industry. SATI is not an employment agency.

2.7 Translators in Cameroon

After examining the translator's status around the world, this part of the work studies the translator's status in Cameroon, which is the core subject of this piece of work.

2.7.1 Organization and role of translators

The role of the translator can be viewed through the study of the translators that existed during the various periods that marked the history of Cameroon. These periods include:

a). The post-colonial era

This period is marked by what is known as "natural translators". A natural translator could be described as one who has not been exposed to a literate culture but possesses outstanding competence in languages and alien cultures outside his immediate environment. In the midst of two or more individuals who use different languages, the natural translator acts as a mediator. They could be literate but had no formal training as translators. They were either found in religious arenas, local and administrative units or royal courts. Because they were always working with those in power, sometimes the masses were afraid of them, they gave them some respect, and they were regarded as belonging to a higher class; however, they were sometimes treated as traitors. They greatly contributed to the evolution of translation and interpretation in Cameroon.

b). The arrival of the missionaries

Apart from creating an opening between two cultures, the natural translators became more focused on the transfer of knowledge in religious texts from European to African languages. This period is marked by the merging of Cameroonian and European cultures. Since missionaries' intention was to Christianize Africans, informal learning of both European and African languages started in order to create an avenue for the exchange of cultures.

c). The colonial and post-colonial periods

During this period, the translator maintained his role as facilitator between two cultures; however, given the nature of colonization, translators were more or less imposed upon them to do their jobs because they were under the dominion of Europeans. Under the German colonial legacy, Cameroonians were trained to speak and write German. Only those who excelled in this language had the honour to serve as translators and interpreters to German Governors. None of those who were called to play this role rose to the rank of administrator before the end of the German rule in Cameroon. Under the French and English Trusteeship, translators and interpreters were needed to draft conventions and treaties between colonial powers and between these powers, as well as native authorities and regional governments.

d). Between 1954 and 1961

Less translation work was done because both Cameroons were using either French or English. However, Article 1 Paragraph 3 of the Federal Constitution of 1st September 1961 imposed French and English as official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Furthermore, Article 31 Paragraph 2 provided that Laws shall be published in the two official languages of the Federal Republic. Consequently, translators and interpreters became indispensable. Very few Cameroonians at the time were fluent in both languages. The necessity to create a translation and Interpretation Service gained credence in the Presidency of the Republic and the Federal National Assembly. In 1972, the Unitary State was born leading to the dissolution of the Federal House, the East and West Cameroon Houses of Assembly, the West Cameroon House of Chiefs and the creation of the National Assembly. This increased the workload for translators and interpreters during the legislative process of the unified Assembly.

2.7.2 Market trends

After both Cameroons were unified, translators kept on doing their job; the early 1980s saw the setting up of the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) to train Cameroonians who were directly recruited in the Public Service. From the 1990s, with the advent of multiparty politics, translators and interpreters, more than ever before, became active players in the legislative process, given the increasingly heated debates on crucial political issues. On September 10 1994, the first association regrouping these professionals was born under the name *Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters of Cameroon* (APTIC). The aim of this association was to promote professional ethics among translators and ensure good-quality translation and interpretation. Even though the State stopped recruiting students from ASTI, globalization has made it possible that translators do not need to be under an institution before working. Most of them started operating as independent translators.

Over the years, translators *"have grown professionally to occupy high profile positions in the Administration such as Minister, Secretary of State, Vice-Minister, Ambassador, Technical Adviser and Secretary General of a Ministry just to name a few"* (Tarkang 2002:11)

Generally, based on the classification we opted for at the beginning of this study, there are three types of translators in Cameroon: civil servants, private sector or in-house translators and, independent translators, who could either be contractors or freelancers. The translation market is known to exist in Cameroon by virtue of its bilingualism. Public and private firms always employ the services of translators. The pay package of translators varies according to the institutions employing them. Translators in the public service receive the salary allocated to civil servants of their category, which is 267,760 CFAF (highest salary of grade A2), excluding bonuses, and those employed by the private sector earn a salary which is slightly higher than this amount. During an interview carried out in SONARA (Société nationale de raffinage) as part of the writing process of this study, it was made clear that translators are considered as chiefs of service and as such, earn a basic salary of not less than 300.000CFAF. Freelance translators can earn more than that depending on their performance, that is, the quality of the translation they produce.

2.7.3 Some problems faced by translators in Cameroon

The translation market is facing internal as well as external threats. Internal threats include, on the one hand, issues such as language combination, quality translations and contracts. It has been observed that it is easier for translators with French as the first language to obtain translation projects as compared to those with English. The reason is that most texts or documents from other countries around the world are written in English (especially in the case of freelance) and need to be translated into French. That is why most English translators end up leaving the country for better opportunities. Quality translation is directly linked to the translator's personal performance and job satisfaction. After leaving school, some translators decide to work on their own and do not open up for further training by senior colleagues in the field. This situation does not only have an effect on the translator's individual performance, but also, on the number of projects the latter receives.

On the other hand, external threats include the type of clients, the presence of bilinguals and self-translation. Hall (1994:49), a great author on the sociology of work, concluded that in liberal professions, dealing with poor clients only leads to less prestige. The presence of quacks that pass for translators has been, on several occasions, decried by professional translators. The market is not well structured to make a distinction between a professional and a non-professional. Moreover, self-translation does not only refer to those who translate their own work but also, to those who use internet tools such as Google Translation to produce their own texts in the language they desire. When these texts are presented in the places where they have to be used, it is the image of the Cameroonian translator that is wrongly portrayed. As it was said at the beginning of this work, machines cannot replace human translators.

It is now evident that the translator's status is hardly described in detail. Generally, 'the translator's status has received very little attention in translation studies as a subject in its own right. Although the literature abounds with references to translation as a low-status profession, few publications, let alone empirical studies, have addressed the topic

systematically and exhaustively. "This vacuum in the literature may reflect the general lack of focus in the discipline on *translator* as opposed to *translation*" (Mossop and Gengshen in Helle and Dam and Korning, 2008:71-96).

Moreover, it is likely that many countries have not taken a close interest in the provisions related to translators put in place by UNESCO. For many, as Bassnett (Helle and Korning, 2008:73) point out, translation is a secondary, reproductive mechanical, non-creative process ''*best over and done with quickly and cheaply*''. As a profession, it is described as a peripheral, insignificant and low-status occupation. However, as we have seen from the cross-country perspective, some countries are more advanced in the organization of the domain of translation and the recognition of professionals as compared to others.

In Cameroon, translation is not considered a cheap profession. It may only be so when the professional translator, who does not know the value of his/her profession, decides to offer their services at a cheap rate and without any condition. A close look at translators demonstrates that the actual place they occupy in Cameroonian society is aided by the existing legal framework in order to raise the awareness of the translators themselves, the authorities, users of translation services, and the translator's status.

After the cursory review of the word 'status' in its various domains and contexts and after looking at the various factors that are taken into consideration when studying the status of a profession, the translator's status can now be defined in this context. On the one hand, the professional status of an individual is his legal position and perception of his profession. It is measured by the general rights and obligations, which include, respectively, pay, security, prestige, good working conditions, service to humanity and adherence to the code of ethics. These rights and obligations are elements from which professionals derive their satisfaction. On the other hand, the professional status of a group includes, in addition to elements related to individuals, issues such as the organization of the profession, training, professional associations and the general perception of the profession in the society. The perception of a profession is determined by legal instruments, by the professionals themselves and by other members of the society.

3. Methodology

This study aimed to identify, describe and examine the current challenges facing the status of the translation profession in Cameroon. The study specifically solicited translators' opinions regarding how they perceive themselves to be, how they are treated in the various institutions where they work, and most especially if there is any legal framework that defines them, their role, their rights and obligations.

This study adopts a Sociological design adopted to gain plausible knowledge about the social world of translators in Cameroon. In this vein, both exploratory and experimental studies were carried out. In other words, the existence of problems related to the translator's status in society was examined, but in the discussion, the causes of those problems were equally looked into in order to propose reliable solutions. The experimental design relevant to this study is concerned with finding out the cause-effect relationship of the phenomenon under study.

A quantitative, qualitative, and field study approaches have been used through in-depth interviews and questionnaires using a purposive sample of translation agents in Cameroon. Types of quantitative approach include description, correlation, cause-comparison, experimentation. Quantitative designs or the positivists approach to social phenomena is obtained through quantifiable evidence.

The qualitative design of the understanding of social phenomenon uses direct observation, communication with participants, or analysis of texts, and may stress contextual and subjective accuracy over generality. Types of this approach include participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups and many others.

Within the framework of this study, data was collected both from documentary and field sources. Documentary sources included books, articles (published and unpublished), legal documents such as the Cameroon Constitution, and the various decrees related to the translation profession in particular, the Declaration of Human Rights, the Berne Convention, UNESCO's Nairobi Recommendation and the Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations. Field sources included observation and mixed questionnaires (open and closed). In other words, questionnaires were conceived in a manner that gave room for qualitative data.

The target population for this study is professional translators and their users. Users here refer particularly to the State. To know the position of the State vis-à-vis the corps of translators, the study referred to written and official documents regulating the practice of translation in Cameroon.

4. Presentation of findings

The findings will be presented in two major parts. The first part of the presentation will be based on the findings obtained through the documents which constitute the rules and regulations of the practice of translation in Cameroon. These documents are both from international and national instruments. The second part will be based on the questionnaires that were administered to translators in the field. As such, we had two sources of data: the questionnaires and the official documents, which are both divided into sub-parts.

These findings are designed to answer the five research questions of this work: Is the translator's status in Cameroon clearly defined and respected? Are translators in Cameroon aware of their status? If yes, how many and which category? Do the employers of translators know the translator's status? For those translators who know their status, are they satisfied with its description?

4.1 Demographic profiles
A self-report voluntary demographic profile was included in the affective questionnaire. The demographic characteristics of the translators who participated in the research are displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Respondents' profiles

No	Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age of Respondents	20 - 39	29	72.5
		40 - 59	10	25
		60 and above	1	2.5
2	Gender of Respondents	Males	28	70
		Females	12	30
3	Residential Areas	Yaoundé	30	75
		Douala	3	7.5
		Buea	5	12.5
		Bamenda	2	5

The age of a group denotes the specificities belonging to that group. Three age ranges were proposed from 20-39, 40-59 and 60 and above. The reason for such classification was to provide a wide range of ages in which many individuals in the sample could find themselves, given the fact that the sample was not chosen based on age. The findings revealed that 29 out of forty belong to the first age range that is, 20-39, 10 were between 40 and 59 and 1 was 60 and above. In other words, though young, most of the sample population is adult.

It was also important to know the gender of the respondents in order to identify the differences and similarities in their various answers. Given the fact that women are different from men, their way of viewing life and their experiences may not always be the same, even in the same environment. The results revealed that the sample population was made up of 28 men and 12 women. There was no gender bias in the distribution of questionnaires. Questionnaires were simply administered to translators who were available in the various places visited.

Lastly, an investigation of the residential area was to see if the experiences undergone in the main towns where translators are active are the same. The main town where questionnaires were administered was Yaoundé, given the high rate of translation activities present in the various ministries. However, to have a general overview of the translator's status in the country, which is the object of this study, it was necessary to administer some questionnaires in Buea, Douala and Bamenda, which are among the various towns, where translation is done. In the end, out of 40, 30 came from Yaoundé, 5 from Buea, 3 from Douala and 2 from Bamenda. Therefore, most of the sample population is found in Yaoundé.

The presentation of findings is divided into two major parts. The first part of the presentation will be based on the findings obtained through the documents which constitute the rules and regulations of the practice of translation in Cameroon. These documents are both from international and national instruments. The second part is based on the questionnaires that were administered to translators in the field. As such, we had two sources of data: the questionnaires and the official documents, which are both divided into parts.

4.2 The legal framework of translation in Cameroon

Some key regulatory instruments were considered important for the study of the legal framework governing the translation profession in Cameroon. They include Decree No. 75-770 of 18 December 1975, Decree N 70/252 of June 25 1976, Decree N 76/251 of June 25 1978,

letter No. B355/SG/PR of 20 November 2019, and some model contracts showing the terms and conditions in which translators work in Cameroon and abroad.

4.2.1 Decree No. 75-770 of 18 December 1975

It is the main document that describes the special rules and regulations applicable to the corps of translators and interpreters in Cameroon. It was signed by the former President El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo.

a) General provisions: In Article 1 (2), it is said that interpreters interpret at meetings and translators translate official documents. Article 2 holds that the Corps of Translation and Interpreting Service shall comprise two cadres: translators and translators/interpreters, both belonging to category A. Article 4 makes provision for a category of translators/interpreters known as "*senior translators or senior interpreters*".

b) Special provisions: Article 6 (1) holds that senior translators belong to grade 2, while translators belong to grade 1. In all, translators have 5 classes which are from the highest to the lowest, senior translators' special class, senior translators' class 1, senior translators' class 2, translators' special class, translators' class 1 and translators' class 2.

c) Recruitment: Article 9 holds that both senior translators and translators are recruited on the basis of qualifications, by professional competitive examination and by grade promotion which is done by selection. While senior translators are recruited with a bachelor's degree, a diploma of translation awarded by a national training institute or by a foreign or international institute shown on a list fixed by order of the President of the Republic. Translators are recruited on the basis of qualification and from among candidates who hold a secondary education ''baccalaureat'' certificate or a recognized equivalent qualification. This means that senior translators are recruited with a bachelor's degree and translators are recruited with a secondary education certificate.

d) Advancement and promotion: Article 15 provides, on the one hand, that senior translators can be promoted as senior translators' special class after two years of effective service in class 1. On the other hand, translators who have completed not less than two years of effective service in class 2 shall be eligible for promotion as in class 1 incremental position 1. In other words, translators' mobility takes place basically within the profession. Also, contract translators who meet the conditions of recruitment determined in the various articles on recruitment shall be absorbed in the grade of translator or senior translator. Advancement in incremental position is made after not less than two years' service in the previous incremental position.

4.2.2 Decree N 70/252 of June 25 1976

This Decree was signed by former President El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo. It states that the translator is entitled to a monthly bonus for special translation works that vary from 4000 CFAF to 40.000CFAF.

4.2.3 Decree N 76/251 of June 25 1978

The Decree was signed by former President El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo; it provides an increment in the bonuses entitled to translators and Interpreters. They now vary from 10.000CFAF to 15.000 CFAF. Also, translators and interpreters are divided into 2 grades of civil servants: grade 1 and grade 2. Those belonging to the first grade receive a bonus of 10.000CFAF while the others receive a bonus of 15.000 CFAF.

4.2.4 **Letter No. B355/SG/PR of 20 November 2019**

The letter from the Presidency authorized the special recruitment of 500 (five hundred) translators and translators-interpreters into the public service for the next coming 5 (five) years. Starting from the 2020 financial year, this special recruitment, which is open to graduate residents in Cameroon or abroad will be conducted over a period of 5 years. Special recruitment of 500 translators and translator interpreters into the public service in accordance with the recommendations of the major national dialogue.

4.3 Findings from questionnaires

The second part of this chapter focuses on the answers provided by professional translators in the field. First of all, we will look at the types of translators, then their training, professional issues, rights and obligations, and, finally, the general appreciation of the profession.

4.3.1 General organization of the profession

The general organization provides an overview of the category of translators under which respondents fall, showing their training institutions, language combinations, employers as well as their length of service.

Table 1: General organization of the profession

No	Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1	Type of Translators	The State	27	67.5
		Private sector	2	5
		Freelance	1+ 10	27.5
2	Training Institution	ASTI	28	70
		Other Schools	8	20
		Abroad	4	10
3	Language Combination	French A/English B	22	55
		English A/French B	12	30
		Other Languages	6	15
4	Length of Service	1 – 5 years	15	37.5
		6 - 10 years	14	35
		11 – 20 years	11	27.5
5	Knowledge/adherence to Association	Aware of existence	26	65
		Aware of number	13	32.5
		Adherence	20	50

The question that was asked here was to know the people or institutions that employ translators' services. The answers provided were the State, the private sector and freelance.

The objective here was to know the various categories of translators that exist and to see if in our country, there are any advantages enjoyed by public service translators as compared to others. In the sample we had, 27 translators were employed by the State, which is about ¾ of the total number of people met, 2 were involved in the private sector, one was exclusively a freelancer, and 9 were employed both as a civil servant and freelancers. This reveals that some translators in Cameroon do not focus exclusively on one source of income.

The institution where one is trained does not only equip one with the necessary skills in a given domain, but it lays down the foundation for all the experiences one will have in life. A good training entails a good preparation to face the professional world. Moreover, this question was chosen in order to create a link between the training (institution) and the knowledge informants have concerning the subject matter under study. In other words, we wanted to know, for example, if translators from ASTI have or do not have an insight into the place of the translator in our country, compared to those from other institutions.

According to the findings, out of 40, 28 of our informants were trained at the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters, 8 were trained in other institutions and 4 were trained abroad. This means that in the Cameroonian society, there are translators trained in institutions abroad. However, most of them especially in the public sector were trained by the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters.

There is a difference between a translator who has French as his first language and one who has English as his first language in Cameroon. The realities in the field are not the same; this difference can be seen in the political and economic aspects. On one hand, in the political milieu, there is a greater need for the translation of administrative documents from French to English because most decision-makers are French-speaking, on the other hand, in the economic world, there is a greater need for French-speaking translators, given the fact that most documents or texts are written in English. For this reason, it is important to know the difference that exists between both groups. Moreover, there are translators who use more than two languages, and as such, it is important to know the difference between a bilingual and a trilingual in this context. The findings revealed that out of 40, 22 were French A and English B (which is more than ½ of our total sample); 12 were English A and French B; 6 had more than 3 languages.

The length of service in an institution shows the level of mobility in the profession, which in turn is determined by the level of satisfaction enjoyed by the professionals. As such, the translator's status also refers to his or her daily affairs, in a specific environment which is the institution under which they work. Just like in the previous point, the length of time is important in the reliability of the opinion one has about an activity. The answers provided were 1-5, 6-10 and 11-20. Out of 40, 15 have between 1-5 years of experience as translators, 14 have 6-10 years and 11 have 11-20 of experience.

The presence of an association of a given profession reveals the level of organization that exists in that profession and the degree of knowledge the society has about it. Though aware of the existence of the main association (APTIC), more than half of the sampled population does not know the number of professional associations that are present in Cameroon. Most of the informants interviewed are not members of the association whose existence they are aware of.

4.3.2 Rights and obligations

It is the key part of the questionnaire because it is directly related to the questions concerning the translator's status. It has to do with the definition of the translator, the role he is called to play and the advantages he is supposed to enjoy. The result also reveals whether the provisions related to the profession are respected. It equally shows the difficulties translators have in playing their roles.

4.3.3 Informants' knowledge base about their professional status

This is one of the obligations of every given professional, to know their professional status. The question set out to identify those who have an idea about the subject matter. Findings show that 25 out of 40 have an idea of what the translator's professional status is. A follow-up question sought to establish the source of knowledge about the subject matter, in order to discover the group in which the latter is mostly discussed, among those who have an idea of what the translator's status is all about, (that is 25).

Out of the 25, 10 heard about the subject matter from their colleagues. 7 during and 5 through personal research. In other words, in this sample, issues related to the translator's status are discussed more among professionals in the field. Also, as far as the knowledge of the existence of an instrument defining the translator's status is concerned, out of 40, 15 agree that such an instrument exists, 10 categorically deny its existence and 15 have no idea at all. Moreover, slightly more than half (16 out of 40 of informants) think that if there is any legal instrument defining the translator, the elements taken into consideration are his rights and privileges, his duties and the legal protection he is supposed to enjoy, making him to be considered as an artist or an author. Meanwhile, 5 believe that the translator is a teacher, and 3 think he is a journalist. 1 (one) thinks he is a banker, 7 gave him other definitions among which feature, secretary, and finally, close to ¼ (that is 8) of the sample has no idea about the professional to whom the translator is assimilated according to the existing definitions. As far as the legal instruments governing the profession in Cameroon are concerned, almost all the respondents assert that they are not fully applied. According to them these decrees or lows need to be revised.

4.3.4 Obligations in playing the role of translator

When asked about the obligations of a translator, half (that is, 20) think it is about meeting deadlines and applying professional ethics, ¼ think they are expected to translate every text or project, ¼ think they should be updated about the terminology of the different domains from which they translate. In effect, close to ¾ of the sample population is not aware of the punishment that follows the non-respect of the provisions concerning the role translators are expected to play in their various institutions.

4.3.5 Specific status at workplace

The specific status of a professional in an institution reveals the importance that a professional enjoys in that institution. Specific status is understood as the special treatment or privileges entitled to a worker in his workplace. Out of 40, 18 of the informants have no specific status in their institutions. 17 do have, and 5 do not know if there is a specific code reserved for

translators in their institutions. For those who have a specific status (17), 10 think the latter is respected, 4 think it not respected. 1 (one) thinks it varies and 2 have no idea.

4.3.6 Space and equipment at the workplace

Like the specific status, the space (office) one is given in doing one's work reveals the importance that worker is to the employers of his services. The working conditions of the informants can also be evaluated by studying the environment in which translators work, as well as their working equipment. 25 out of 40 informants do share their offices with other colleagues or professionals and receive working equipment such as desktops, printers, laptops and internet. When asked about their working conditions, 24 think that they are acceptable, 9 think they are bad and 7 think they are good.

4.3.7 Security and remuneration

The advantages that informants have in their various institutions were also examined. 24 of the respondents said they receive a pension, while for others, the advantages range from medical care to social security and transportation facilities. However, 05 said they have no advantage apart from their salaries. This lead to the conditions surrounding the payment of translators in relation to their work. The results show that close to ¾ believe that their remuneration is not commensurate to their work; in other words, they believe they are underpaid. Notwithstanding, about 1/5 think the contrary and the rest have no idea. Some 25 informants say they carry out other activities not related to translation in their institutions

4.4 General appreciation of the profession

The general appreciation one accords to one's profession reveals the level of satisfaction derived from the latter. The source of motivation is a key determinant in the way one perceives or considers what one does. Since they solicited the way translators perceive themselves, it was important to know what motivated them to choose their profession. This certainly has an influence on the level of determination one needs in doing anything, or to face challenges. The answers obtained ranged from motivation from self, from family, from friends or other sources. The findings revealed that more than ¾ of the total number of respondents were self-motivated before embarking on the translation profession. The rest had external sources of motivation. Simply put, most people in the sample made a personal decision to become translators.

A series of questions were asked to solicit information on what translators think about their profession from a general point of view. The questions also revealed that once in the professional world, the translator still has the same view he had prior to his training and/or his entry into the field. On the one hand, most translators think that their profession is two-sided, that is, it has a positive and a negative side. The answer that more than three-quarters (33 out of 40) of the group provided was that translation is demanding but enjoyable. On the other hand, to go beyond just a general view to bring out the specific issues translators enjoy and dislike about their profession, respondents were asked to choose from a list of the aspects they like about their profession. More than three-quarters love translation because of the art of translating and the mastery of languages. 23 out of 40 deplore the fact that translators are

not given the value they deserve and there is no promotional scale reserved for them in the system.

4.4.1 Perception by employers and other professionals

The translator's status can also be seen through their relationship with employers and colleagues. The nature of the relationship translators have with other professionals equally portrays the way they are perceived in their environment. From the findings, three-quarters said they have a good relationship with their employers and are acknowledged as translators by other professionals in the same institution. However, 20 informants hesitate about the quality of treatment they receive as compared to other professionals with the same educational level. Close to one quarter thinks the other professionals are favoured and the remaining one quarter thinks there is no difference.

Moreover, compared to other professionals, 24 out of 40 think that they are marginalized to a certain degree.
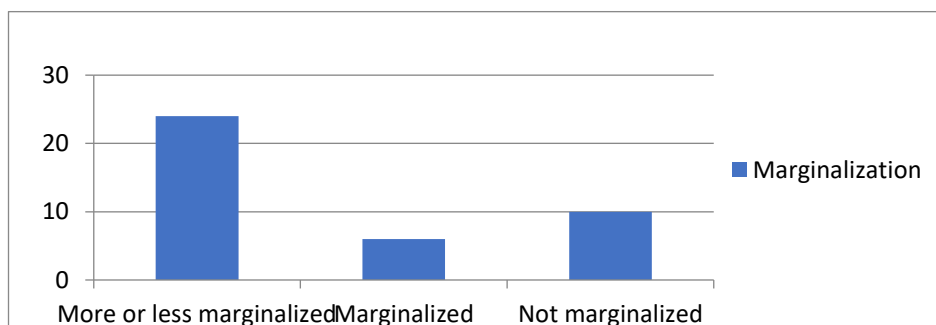
Figure 7: Marginalization

4.4.2 General level of satisfaction

Finally, as far as the profession as a whole is concerned in Cameroon, out of 40, 34 informants are not satisfied and think that much still has to be done; 04 think nothing can be done and 2 are satisfied.
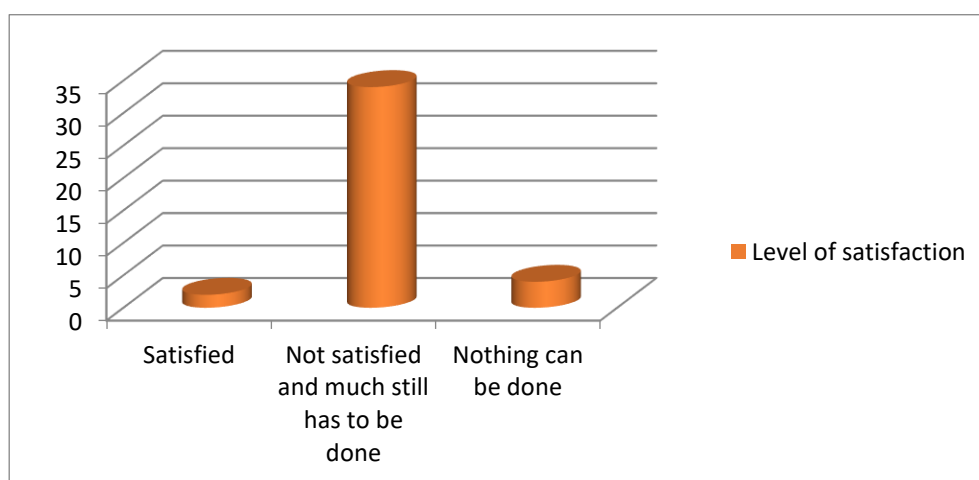

Figure 8: Level of Satisfaction

4.4.3 Suggestions for improving the professional status of the translator

There are three main groups of people on whom translators rely in order for there to be a change in their profession. Concerning policymakers, respondents suggested the following: a legal framework should be elaborated to give value to the translator; recruitment into the public service should be reinstated; translators should be appointed into positions of responsibility; conditions for upward mobility should be enhanced; salaries should be increased; modern equipment should be provided, and finally, measures should be taken for all these plans to be realized. Besides, a professional order of the same nature as the Bar Council or Medical Council should be established for translators. Respondents also intimated that translators needed to be organized to create standards and respect them before they were expected to be respected by others. With these various findings, there is now a good basis for a discussion that will provide insight into the professional status of the translator in Cameroon.

5. Discussion of findings

From the findings solicited from respondents on the legal framework analyses of the translation profession in Cameroon, and from translators in the field. The following questions are still to be answered: What do these findings imply? What are the hidden meanings of all what has been said? What explains the claims of translators as regarding their profession in Cameroon? What is the relationship between the various findings on the one hand, and, on the other, among the findings, the theoretical framework and the policies in place? Have the hypotheses been confirmed? This section discusses the findings, deriving from the content of the questionnaire and the answers provided by the informants. The findings are discussed looking at the similarities between them and those from translators in the field, in relation to theory and empirical literature on professional status. This portion of the work is divided into three main parts: the general organization of the profession, the rights and privileges of translators and the general perception or appreciation of the profession.

5.1 General organization of the profession

This part provides an explanation of the general organisation of the profession in relation to the existing inconsistencies experienced by translators in the field.

5.1.1 Categories of translators

The findings reveal that generally, in Cameroon, there are three categories of translators: those employed by the State, those employed by the private sector and independent translators. A translator can fall into any of these groups or even two of them at the same time (that is, for example, State and freelance). Again, the nature of the profession which allows for multiple sources of income at the same time could be a good reason why they operate as such. It has been observed that most translators hardly stick to just one task. The fact that student translators familiarize themselves with all domains of knowledge such as those related to the economy, politics, health, diplomacy, and the environment… during their training, helps

them develop skills that make them capable of managing different tasks or occupations at the same time.

5.1.2 Training institutions

The fact that most of our respondents were trained in the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) reveals that most of the translators found in the Public Service (who make up the majority of the sample) are former ASTI students, who were recently recruited (by virtue of the number of years they have been working in the public service, which is, between 0-2 years). This equally reveals the key role that the training institution plays in meeting translation needs in and out of the country. More often than not, these institutions are overlooked in the country. The proof is that there are many uncertified individuals who see themselves as translators and pollute the job market. While it is true that some people with a mastery of the two official languages used in Cameroon work as translators, it is also true that there is a great difference between bilingualism and translation. Bilingualism could be defined as the ability of an individual to use two languages in speech and in writing. Translation on its part is the art and science of transferring meaning from one language to another. As such, there is a clear distinction between both concepts. One is more demanding in its application than the other and requires rigorous training. Employers still confuse professional translators with those who call themselves "translators" because they can speak and write in two languages. It has equally been observed that translators from other schools in the country (such as the Institut Superieur de Traduction et interpretation) and abroad are also working in Cameroon, in both the public and private sectors.

5.1.3 Language combinations

Our sample shows that there are more translators with French as their first language. This can be explained by the fact that most of our informants reside in Yaoundé which is a French-speaking area, therefore most translations are done from English to French, unlike in an Anglophone zone where translations are done the other way around. In other words, it is likely that if the same study is done in an English-speaking area, most translators will be English-speaking, because the language in which they work is determined by the linguistic needs of the people. However, it must be admitted that Yaoundé is the main town where translation services are needed in many different languages which explains why there are many translators with English as their first language.

Moreover, during admissions into the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters, the number of students recruited with French as their first language is the same for English. For this reason, it is likely that most Anglophone translators look for employment abroad such as with the African Court of Human Rights, the African Union, and the United Nations. Some of them may also prefer to work as freelancers. However, though in a relatively limited number, translators with English as their first language are equally present in the main cities, given that most administrative documents are conceived in French and need to be translated into English. The same thing is observed for translators who use three languages.

This situation equally reveals the lack of institutionalization of African languages. As an African country with more than 260 ethnic groups, it is difficult to find translators with national language combinations in ministries. They do exist, but their presence is not felt in the academic setting. This may be due to the fact that the use of the national languages is low as compared to that of English and French. Some authors believe that the use of foreign languages in our societies is proof that colonization is yet to be forgotten in Africa. Such is the case with Mufwene and Vigouroux (2008: 229-254), who believe that one cannot talk of globalization without passing through the worldwide recognition of African languages and cultures.

5.1.4 Length of service in institution

One may be tempted to think that the respondents of this study have not served for long in their various institutions, and, as such, cannot provide reliable information. This is not true in the sense that it does not take so many years to understand how an institution operates. From the preliminaries (that is, the way one is received, the job description, the provision of the working tools, good working conditions as well as just and equitable payment), one is able to understand one's appreciation of employers and other professionals. As such, the information provided by these respondents is reliable because on a daily basis, they experience what they say.

The length of service may also be proof of the instability that characterises the job market. If it is difficult to find translators who have served for a long time in a given institution and, as such, are always in search of another job, then somewhere there is a lack of satisfaction. Either on the one hand, they are disadvantaged in the sense that there are no good working conditions, they are being overtasked beyond what they are supposed to and underpaid; or, on the other hand, they are the ones who think that they are exploited and underpaid; which are enough reasons to always be in search of new jobs. Another reason for changing occupational institutions, as suggested by some authors, is the strengthening or weakening of their internal organizations.

5.1.5 Knowledge about and adherence to professional associations

The fact that most of our informants do not know the number of existing translators' professional associations reveals that the general level of the organization of the profession is still at its embryonic stage. In other countries, most of the changes that occurred in the domain of translation were introduced by professional associations. A study carried out by Sadjo (2011) reveals that in Cameroon, there are four professional associations: the Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters of Cameroon (APTIC); the Cameroon Translators and Interpreters Society (CATIS); the "Association des Traducteurs/Terminologues reviseurs et Interprètes du Cameroun" (ATTRIC) and the "Association des Tranducteurs /Adaptateurs du Cameroun" (ATAC). The first two exist officially and the others are still new. Also, the level of participation in the association is alarming. The sample revealed that very few (less than one quarter) of our informants are members and actively take part in the activities of the associations. They complain of the lack of seriousness on the part of those associations.

5.2 Rights and obligations

This part refers to the definition of the translator, the role he is called to play and the advantages he is supposed to enjoy. It reveals whether the provisions related to the profession are respected. It equally shows the difficulties translators have in fulfilling their role.

5.2.1 Knowledge translators have about their professional status

While it may be true that some studies have been carried out on the perception of the translator in various times and geographical locations, decrying the fact that translators are not recognized, marginalized and not given the value they deserve, the question relating to the actual knowledge of those concerned has hardly been raised. The argument here is that professionals in this category cannot expect to be known and valued by others when they do not know themselves.

It was found out from the findings that about 3/5 of the sample has no idea about what their professional status is. The reason they give for this is that they have never heard about the status of translators. Since the translator's status encompasses the definition, the role and the rights and privileges of translators, lacking knowledge in one aspect is an impediment to their job satisfaction. This problem may be due to the fact that from right from the training institution to the field of practice, emphasis is not laid on the professional status of the translator, which, on the contrary, is the core element of every profession in the world. Some of the informants are however aware of the existence of a legal framework that governs their practice in Cameroon, but refute its applicability to the translator. But as it has been noted, the translator's status does not only limit itself to the legal framework. It encompasses a variety of factors that have to be understood by the translator.

5.2.2 Obligations in playing the role of translator

Most of the respondents think that their first obligation is to meet deadlines, followed by the observation of the code of ethics and the translation of every project. The translator's obligations can be studied from two perspectives: the law in place and the code of ethics. On the one hand, the main law that provides the rules and regulations of the Corps of Translators in Cameroon stipulates that those translators, before their recruitment, are supposed to have a level of education which varies from an advanced level certificate to an undergraduate diploma, Master's degree and PhD. Without one of these qualifications, they cannot have access to the profession. They are also expected to translate official documents.

Moreover, disciplinary measures have been put in place for defaulters in the public service. One of those measures is the deferral of advancement in incremental positions. In other words, translators who do not do their job as expected will not enjoy the promotion provided by the law. On the other hand, the general code of ethics requires translators and interpreters to: respect their clients' right to privacy and confidentiality, disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest, decline to undertake work beyond their competence or accreditation levels, relay information accurately and impartially between parties, maintain professional detachment and refrain from inappropriate self-promotion, and guard against misuse of inside information for personal gain. It is important to note that disciplinary measures vis-à-vis translators can go as far as imprisonment for lack of accuracy and for

misrepresentation of information. That is why the main rule that has been emphasised by many institutions and associations is the quality of the translation.

5.2.3 Treatment of translators in institutions and working conditions

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the treatment one receives in the institution where one works can be studied by looking at three elements which are: his relationship with his employers and other professionals, and the working conditions (which include the environment, the tools and the payment).

5.2.4 Specific status at the workplace

The questionnaires filled by most of the informants show that there is no specific status reserved for translators in their institutions. They are simply considered as any other professional with the same educational level. In most cases, they work in the secretariats and as such, they are considered as secretaries. However, in some places such as the National Assembly, there is a unit for translators and a description of specific roles, rights and obligations consistent with the activities carried out there.

5.2.5 Space and equipment at work

Findings revealed that translators' working conditions are deplorable. While it is true that many translators working in the Public Service do not have personal ''rooms'' for offices, they at least have a table and a chair which are equally referred to as ''office''. Many do receive basic working equipment such as desktops, printers, rims of papers, and internet, in order to make sure they work effectively. Also, it is important to mention that their work is directed by the Presidency of the Republic; most decisions relating to the profession are taken at the level of the Presidency and signed by the President himself, which is not the case with other professions. This is a prestige that is given only to translators. Moreover, in every ministry where translators are found, they work in close collaboration with the secretary's general who plays a key role in the functioning of their ministries.

 Added to this, a good number of translators work at the Presidency, which is not the case with many other professions. However, this is not the case with independent translators who do not enjoy the same privileges as public service translators and have to face the tough nature of the market because of the existence of quacks who pass for translators.

5.2.6 Security and remuneration

Job security refers to a worker's sense of having continuity of employment, and the advantages or guarantees he is supposed to have. This security determines the quality of work produced, the well-being and the general job satisfaction of the worker. Elements falling under this category include medical covering, means of transportation, allowances (house, family) pension and various types of insurance.

 Most translators in the public service, as proved by the findings, are only guaranteed pensions. In other words, when they attain retirement age, they will be receiving an amount of money from the State. This is not the case with private or freelance workers. They themselves have to ensure the continuity of their job and plan for their future. While it is true

that the level of job security for the translator is at its minimum in Cameroon, it is important to mention that the same thing is observed in many other professions and in other countries.

With regard to payment, more than three quarters of informants decried the fact that they do more work than what they are supposed to, yet they are underpaid. During fieldwork, one of the informants made us understand that in the Public Service, the translator is only supposed to translate official documents and that if some are doing more than what is normally expected of them, then they do not know their rights. The same thing is clearly stipulated in the general provisions of Decree No. 75-770 of 18 December 1975. Translators are supposed to receive the remuneration that is reserved for all category A2 cadres. It is likely, on the one hand, that some translators who have served for more than two to four years have not been promoted as stipulated in the regulatory framework. Similarly, those who think they are underpaid are those who translate even texts that are not official. This is the case with some informants who think their main role is to translate every text.

In addition, as someone in a liberal profession, a translator is free to carry out other lucrative activities to increase his/her income. Some key documents show the level of income translators receive apart from their salaries (for regular workers). In other words, financially, translation is one of the most prestigious professions that exist, but there is no special control on the level and sources of income of translators, as a result of their numerous activities. As such, there is no limit to their income. There is a probability that translators who complain are those who do not really excel in the profession. They may well be employed in the public service; they translate and their unit heads revise their work, but they cannot be entrusted with serious projects out of that setting because of their poor performance.

5.3 General appreciation of the profession
This part reveals some of the reasons why translators in the field do not have job satisfaction.

5.3.1 Initial motivation versus experience
The choice of a profession is determined by several factors. Among the various factors that are usually referred to, we have the history of the profession, its importance and relation to society, the need for other workers, methods of entering, earnings and regularity of employment. Some authors have defined the choice of an occupation as a subjective process which they have classified into three periods namely: childhood, defined as the fantasy period; adolescence, defined as the tentative period; and maturity, defined as the realistic period. Some individuals import childhood and adolescence choices into maturity without measuring their feasibility. This could explain the reason why most of our informants were self-motivated to become translators but no longer find satisfaction after becoming professionals.

Other authors have identified another factor influencing the choice of a profession known as parental influence, also known as occupational inheritance. It is said that some parents want to live their dreams through their children. As such, from birth, they start coaching the latter on what they should become in life. More than three-quarters of the sample complain that translation is very demanding, translators are not given the value they deserve and they have no promotional scale. It is important to note at this juncture, that it is possible that there is no awareness on the part of some translators as far as Decree No. 75-770 of 18

December 1975 is concerned. As described under the legal framework, previously, of translation in Cameroon, this decree prescribes the professional mobility applicable to translators in the public service. Provisions are made for the advancement and promotion of translators in Chapter III of the said Decree. Article 15 stipulates that class promotion in the cadre of translators is done by selection, taking into account the availability of personnel.

Senior translators who are recruited with at least a bachelor's degree can be promoted into the senior translators' special class after two years of effective service in class 1. Translators (recruited with secondary education certificates) who have completed not less than two years' effective service in class 2 shall be eligible for promotion to class 1 incremental position 1. Article 16 prescribes that advancements in incremental position may be made after not less than two years' service in the incremental position; they shall be automatic after four years' service in the same incremental position unless deferred as a disciplinary measure.

Summarily, there exist three classes for both senior translators and translators namely, the special class, class 1 and class 2. From class 2 to the special class, there are eleven incremental positions. In other words, translators' mobility as relating to translation in the Public Service generally takes place within the profession.

There is a mix-up when it comes to the translator's place in the public service. They do what is known as specialist work and as such, cannot be given a duty other than what they were trained to do. This is the case with other professions such as accountancy, teaching, and medicine, which are specialists in their fields and can only have mobility within those fields. When most translators refer to the ''promotional scale'', they are thinking of administrative or political positions and nominations such as minister, secretary of State, ambassador, just to name a few. But these positions can only be assigned to those who have officially been trained in this respect. The problem of promotional scale should therefore be referred to within the profession, as described by Caplow (1954) as vertical mobility, which is an upward or downward movement in the same profession. For example, in the case of Cameroon, a ''simple'' translator becomes a senior translator when he/she acquires translation diplomas while working. Caplow also defines vertical mobility as a promotion or a demotion within an occupational group. The example here is a translator who leaves from a lower incremental position to a higher one.

5.3.2 Perception by other professionals

Most of our respondents have a good relationship with both their direct bosses and other professionals with whom they work on a daily basis. However, because of the way the administration is organized, they sometimes feel marginalized as compared to the other professionals with the same level of education. Marginalization, according to informants, is based on the fact that there is no promotional scale for translators. This point has extensively been discussed in the previous discussion.

5.3.3 General job satisfaction

Job satisfaction as described by Caplow (1954) is a subjective response to work. It is important because it is linked to the productivity of the professional and has an influence on other spheres of life. 9I Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can be the source of job satisfaction or

dissatisfaction. Some of the determinants of job satisfaction include autonomy, variety, freedom from close supervision, good pay, job security, other economic benefits and promotional opportunities.

From the above list, it is likely that translators in the Public Service do not experience job satisfaction because of close supervision and lack of autonomy. Also, variety is a very important factor. Most translators in Cameroon complain that they spend all their time behind machines, simply translating texts. As a result, there is no avenue for other job activities in order to create a different atmosphere that will produce a sense of change in them. It is likely that this issue of job dissatisfaction is of a psychological origin. Human beings in general hate monotony. In the case of translators, it is likely that their skills are simply limited to mere translation and not to other activities involving creativity.

Throughout their training, translators are taught to think and look for ways to explain and solve translation problems. In the face of such problems, students use their general knowledge and skills to propose solutions that will best express the ideas of the author of the source text, in coherence with the culture and realities of the target text. Such knowledge or skills do not just limit themselves to words and their equivalents but to space, time, matter and form. This practice has awakened in translators the ability to go beyond words and to develop a global approach not only towards translation but towards knowledge and life issues in general. Overproduction and waste are terms that are used in the domain of economics to explain this situation. Translators think they are being ''wasted'' behind machines.

However, Cameroon is not the only country where professional translators face difficulties doing their job. Canada, a model country in matters related to translation, still has problems in its translation industry, despite the organization, development and experience in the domain. Such problems include uninformed clients, the low value attached to the translator's status, multiple independent translators and firms, and the gap between clients' expectations and graduates' training.

The discussed points have proved that based on the legal framework, the existing theories and empirical literature, there are some irregularities relating to the professional status of translators. They are perceived as an important corps in Cameroon. Some assumptions that led to misconceptions of the profession have been clarified. The origin of the job dissatisfaction resulting in low status for translators in Cameroon should not only be studied from a legal, economic or social perspective but also, from a psychological perspective.

6. Recommendations

The conclusion arrived at, after exploring the findings obtained through questionnaires and describing the available documents, is that the translator's status in Cameroon still remains an abstract concept, especially in the minds of translators themselves. Therefore, in order to promote the development of the profession and the well-being of translators, it is suggested that:

The translator's status, just like that of every other profession, should become a major and distinct part (made up of rights and obligations, the job description, working conditions, remuneration and professional ethics) of the translator's research activities. This is to ensure

that students are well prepared to play their role as professionals and prevented from having assumptions which are contrary to the realities in the field.

The translation profession is one that demands constant learning to update oneself in order to understand and address translation problems. In this vein, translators in the field can learn about themselves and help educate their employers and those around them in order to avoid any eventual friction such as being undermined by other professionals, misused by their employers, and neglected by the State.

The numerous fragmentations of associations weaken the position of the corps of translators and interpreters to assert and defend their rights and privileges, as well as to ensure the respect of professional ethics. These various associations could federate into an order so as to promote a better organisation of the profession in Cameroun.

For translators to be included in the decision-making process, they should impose themselves in the daily practice of their profession and should be convincing enough for authorities to understand that they are indispensable.

Also, countries advanced in the domain of translation (like Canada) could serve as examples of the various methods that were used to bring about stability in the profession. Such methods include a proper organization of the profession both by the law in place and a federating body and the creation of avenues for the development of the profession in general. However, these solutions should be adapted to the Cameroonian context, because the culture here has unique features.

For all these suggestions to be considered and implemented, the State should act as the backup device for both individual translators and the domain of translation as a whole. The existing legal framework should be revised to suit the recent changes that have occurred in the domain. Moreover, the government's decision to recruit 500 translators is a salutary measure to ensure the continuous recruitment of translators in the public sector, and also, to create jobs that will require their services. This will prevent the problem of brain drain in the profession.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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