

NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TRANSLATORS & INTERPRETERS (NITI)

THEME: TRANSLATION, INTERPRETATION IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

SUB-THEME: PARLIAMENTARY TRANSLATION

TAKING POINTS

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I want thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today about Parliamentary Translation, I am truly honored that the Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters have given me the privilege to address this **great audience**.

I will begin by talking about democracy and democratic governance, even though our learned colleague who spoke earlier has so eloquently discussed the theme.

1. What is democracy?

“Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens participate equally—either directly or through elected representatives—in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. It encompasses social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination”.

2. What is democratic governance?

- **Definition:** Democratic governance focuses on that act of running a state where political, social, environmental, economic factors are distributed **equally**, to ensure the efficiency of governance and public institutions.
- **Principles:**

- All members have equal rights and responsibilities (**equality**)
- Impartiality and fairness (**equity**)
- Freedom to express one's views and to vote on those ideas
- The rights of the minority must be protected
- Openness and access to information (**participation**)
- Leaders are elected (**to vote and be voted for**)

It is one of the major keys to economic growth and human development

Freedom of expression and the right to participate; are the why translation is important in a Parliament.

Parliamentary Translation

A Parliament is described as the national representative body having supreme legislative powers within the state.

“A **parliament** is a legislature whose function and power are similar to those dictated by the Westminster system of the United Kingdom. More generally, "parliament" may simply refer to a democratic government's legislature”.

Common history, culture and geographic location are the factors that

For example; Multinational Parliaments

🌀 Central American Parliament

🌀 Pan-African Parliament

🌀 European Parliament

🌀 ECOWAS Parliament

Translation in Parliament ensures that :-

- Multilingualism
- Transparency
- Understanding
- Exchange of Views

Multilingualism is the act of using multiple languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. For example at ECOWAS we use 3 official working languages English, French and Portuguese, and at the European Union they use 24 official languages.

All parliamentary documents are published in all the official languages of the Community and every MP has the right to speak in the official language of his/her choice. This guarantees transparency and accessibility of Parliament's work for the general public.

Multilingualism is the reflection of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Community. It also makes the institution more accessible and transparent for the general public, which constitutes a guarantee for the success of the democratic system.

The Parliament differs from the other institutions through its obligation to ensure the highest possible degree of multilingualism, transparency, equality and freedom of expression. All the Community citizens must be able to refer to legislation directly concerning them in the language of their country.

Furthermore in future, every citizen would have the right to stand for election to the Parliament, it is therefore vital for Members to have a perfect command of one of the official languages. The right of each Member to read parliamentary documents, follow debates and speak in his/her own language is expressly recognized in the Rules of Procedure.

In addition, in its role as legislator the Parliament is obliged to guarantee that the linguistic quality of all the laws which it adopts is beyond reproach in all official languages.

Transparency is the openness and accountability of the government which allows citizens to have access to information which facilitates their understanding of decision making processes.

- ✓ Publicized Parliamentary debates
- ✓ Published government audit reports
- ✓ Advertisement of government positions
- ✓ Freedom and flow of information

Understanding Awareness of what is happening in the government. It covers the economic, social, and financial state of the country. For example at the ECOWAS Parliament during our biannual sessions each member state presents a country report, to make the other members aware of the political, social, environmental and economic situation in their country. These presentations provide an overview and often highlight areas of common interest, which lead to better decision making. Working together for a common goal and the common good of the people of West Africa, and we hope in the future that this will be able to reach all the corners of the world.

Exchange of Views freedom to express one's views and the right to vote on those ideas the most vital part of legislation. The Parliament is there to be the voices of the people, which are formally known as Parliamentary debates and sometimes transform from verbal to physical fights. These disagreements lead to decision making, which are then made into laws. But these views that become laws are more than what we define as right and wrong, it is a reflection of who we are, the way we live our lives and the legacy we leave behind.

Translation is the blood stream of any multilingual parliament.

As a translator in a Parliament is important to be very professional and principled, because sensitive nature of the kinds of material that you will come across in your work. There are very high expectations and sometimes unrealistic demands made, but one must be grounded and have confidence in their abilities.

Challenges to translation:

- DIY Culture (google translate), as technology advances many tools are developed to facilitate translation. Translation tools make it easier and faster to get translation work done. But unfortunately, many non-translators feel that this means anyone can google translate an entire document and they will have a properly translated document. This is never case though; documents still need that human element to ensure that the work that the words are put in the right context and that is has meaning.

Developments in parliamentary translation:

- Just as new translation tools are developed thanks to technology, the role and functions of the Translator evolves also, many institutions expect the translator to translate and revise their own work.
- Due to the nature of certain institutions there has been the need to develop in-house terminology that is characterized with the working sphere of the institution and therefore the creation of the role of "Terminologists". Terminologists facilitate the editing and translation process by researching and locating information or past publications which might help language staff produce high-quality translations.

Functions/advantages of translation in a Parliament:

Access for citizens to the texts

Communication within the organization

Development of terminology databases which increases quality and efficiency in the institution

Employment and training opportunities within the region

Conclusion: In conclusion, translation in any multilingual organization plays an important political and practical role in its functioning. Translation is a specialized area with its own characteristics and special demands dictated by the nature of the work of the institution and international diplomacy.

I thank you for your attention.