

***Diplomatic Translation at Embassies in Pretoria***

***by***

***Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL***

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***Supervisor***

***Dr Helena Kruger-Roux***

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## **Dedication**

First, this work is dedicated to God the Almighty who assisted and guided me through this course at the Department of African Languages, MA Applied Language Studies Option: Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Second to my daughter, Dora Fahima DJIBRIL for her sacrifices and patience, and to my spouse Ibila DJIBRIL, for his encouragement and support which kept me going through difficult times. Finally, to my parents, Late Kouman'yô BIO GUENE and Lamatou OROU NIKKI for the gift of education.

## Declaration

I, Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL, declare that the work I am submitting for assessment contains no section copied in whole or in part from any other sources unless explicitly identified in quotation marks with detailed, completed and accurate referencing. It is being submitted as part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting at the University of Pretoria. This work has never been submitted before for any degree of examination in any other university.

Signature:

Date:

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## Abstract

The role played by translation across the globe has been well established. Translation is very important to build bridges between people who do not share the same language, especially in international organisations. This descriptive research explores the need for translation at diplomatic missions such as embassies and high commissions in Pretoria. More specifically, this study describes the way in which translation is dealt with at embassies in Pretoria, the clients of diplomatic translation, the different categories of documents translated and the diplomatic missions' general translation needs. In order to reach these objectives, this study uses both primary and secondary data analysis. A critical analysis of a questionnaire completed by representatives of embassies and high commissions shows that there is a real need for translation at embassies in Pretoria, especially with regards to the services provided by sworn translators.

**Key words:** diplomatic translation, diplomatic translator, chancery documents, consular documents, sworn translator, outsourced translation, in-house translation.

## List of abbreviations

SA	South Africa
UN	United Nations
AU	African Union
PAP	Pan African Parliament
EU	European Union
SATI	South African Translators' Institute
UNOG	United Nations Offices at Geneva
EEC	European Economic Community
EAEC	European Atomic Energy Community
DGACM	Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DGT	Directorate-General for Translation
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EUC	European Union Commission
BC	Before Christ

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the need for language service providers has become increasingly important in all domains of activities, especially in international bodies where people speak a number of different languages. Embassies are not exceptions to this phenomenon. An embassy is an institution where diplomats from one country conduct bilateral or multilateral relations between their country, the country of accreditation and the countries of jurisdiction. Since in most of the cases the various states do not share the same official language, the use of a translator or interpreter becomes a necessity—crucial in the facilitation of communication and the avoidance of misunderstandings. In this context, House (2015:3) states that:

Translation has often been described as a builder of bridges, an extender of horizons, providing recipients with an important service and enabling them to move beyond the borders of the world staked out by their own language. It is through translation that lingua-cultural barriers can be overcome. So translation is one of the most important mediators between societies and cultures.

The translator or interpreter assists diplomats in the translation of diplomatic documents (conventions, treaties, agreements, and diplomatic correspondences) and during diplomatic meetings in order to facilitate communication. However, it should be noted that not only diplomatic documents are translated in embassies; there are also documents such as birth or marriage certificates, academic transcripts, and many other kinds of documents from external clients who require translations.

This research will investigate the need for language services such as translation and interpreting in embassies in Pretoria, with special focus on document translation.

### **1.1. The research problem**

Language service providers offer a variety of services such as translation, interpreting, revision, proofreading, editing, etc., however, when the average layperson is asked where to go to find a language service provider, he will typically suggest many places except an embassy. This is because an embassy is a closed, secure place (which is an important condition for the safety of the diplomats and staff); many people are not aware of what happens inside. Those who have some knowledge of the workings of an embassy will say that diplomats work there to ensure a good relationship between their country and the country of accreditation, or for the protection of their citizens. Others will say that an embassy's primary function is the issuing of visas to people who wish to visit the representative country. Despite this, there are language services provided at diplomatic missions.

This research is intended to describe the way in which diplomatic missions in Pretoria deal with translation needs.

### **1.2. The purpose of the study**

Despite the advent of machine translation, the role played by translators and interpreters has been well established, as stated in Munday (2016:1). The need for language services increases more and more in big institutions and international bodies, highlighting the importance of translators. In this respect, Erasmus (1999:103) states:

Government language practitioners have a duty to translate official documents. Their duty furthermore extends to the translation of correspondence by members of the public directed at government officials such as the Minister of Home, Education and so on, as well as translating acts of parliament, notices, and similar documents. Government departments give instructions to the National Language Service that they need certain documents translated into certain languages.



Based on the importance of translation and interpreting in various institutions, this research aims to investigate and describe diplomatic language services at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute positively, by filling a gap of knowledge in the field of language services as a profession.

### **1.3. The objectives of the research**

In order to achieve the aim of this research, the following objectives should be reached:

- 1.3.1 Define diplomatic translation;
- 1.3.2 Describe the clients of diplomatic translation services;
- 1.3.3 Describe the types of diplomatic translation required by the various clients;
- 1.3.4 Describe the way diplomatic translation is dealt with in the various diplomatic missions in Pretoria;
- 1.3.5 In the case of in-house translation services, describe the services offered by the particular diplomatic mission;
- 1.3.6 Describe the ancillary services that are required at diplomatic missions for translated documents.

### **1.4. Research questions**

The following questions will guide this research:

- 1.4.1 What is diplomatic translation?
- 1.4.2 Who are the clients of diplomatic translation?
- 1.4.3 What types of diplomatic translation services are required by the various clients?
- 1.4.4 How is diplomatic translation dealt with in the various diplomatic missions in Pretoria?
- 1.4.5 In the case of in-house translation services, what services are offered by the particular diplomatic mission?
- 1.4.6 What ancillary services are required at diplomatic missions for translated documents?

## **1.5. Literature review**

### **1.5.1. Introduction**

Fuentes Luque (1999:54-66) provides a brief history of diplomatic translation and shows the peculiarities that arise due to the fact that such translation is strongly linked to a particular field. According to Fuentes Luque (1999:56), diplomatic translation is done in embassies, diplomatic missions, consulates and international organisations, and is defined based on the type of texts translated and the 'conventions established'. It's worth noting, however, that not all embassies have a translation or interpreting service. There are two types of documents translated in embassies: chancery documents and consular documents.

This research will focus on the development of diplomatic translation. Specifically, this research intends to examine the translation carried out at diplomatic missions in Pretoria. In order to thoroughly cover the various dimensions of this phenomenon, an extensive literature review will be undertaken. The literature review will include discussions on three main terms, namely diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator, clients of diplomatic translation and types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients.

### **1.5.2. Diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator**

It is impossible to ignore the role played by a translator in diplomatic missions today. The types of documents he translates are mostly those diplomatic in nature, hence the term diplomatic translation. The diplomatic translator works in a diplomatic mission to facilitate communication between countries not sharing the same official language.

Baranyai (2011:2-12) describes the use of language in diplomatic communication both in ancient and modern times. In the past, the Acadian language was the most important language of diplomatic communication used in the ancient Near East. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, it was used in the conclusion of the first peace treaty in history, between the pharaoh of Egypt and the king of Hittites. The original version of this treaty was translated into Egyptian. Following the popularity of the Acadian language came the reign of supremacy of Greek and Aramean languages, and then Latin, which eventually declined in use in Western Europe



since most of the modern terms related to politics, economy, administration, etc. had no Latin equivalents. Afterwards, French became the most significant language of diplomatic interaction. English became the first language in diplomacy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and today, English and French are the two working languages of the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. For the purpose of multilateral diplomatic communication, other languages have been introduced in the United Nations, namely Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian.

Afkir (2013:3) argues that many diplomats and participants in international meetings share different languages and cultures, which explains the strong need for translators (written and spoken) to solve the problem of communication. In this context she wrote that “[t]ranslation and interpretation at the United Nations play a very significant role in promoting diplomatic relations and facilitating communications” (Afkir, 2013:3). However, employing translators does not fully solve the problem as translators cannot always have full mastery of the parties’ cultures and may not master all of the subjects. Afkir (2013:3) suggests that in the “domain of diplomatic translation, particularly at the United Nations, translators must be aware of the political, social and economic events that take place in their countries in particular and all over the world in general. Moreover, they should always take into consideration of the specialized terminology and fixed expressions used.”

The need for diplomatic translation in diplomatic missions also implies the existence of clients related to it.

### **1.5.3. Clients of diplomatic translation**

Cao and Zhao (2008:11) state that “[t]he Language Services under the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) provides translations for some 50 bodies within the UN Organisation and other parts of the UN system.” This implies that the diplomatic staff is the main client making use of diplomatic translation services. According to Fuente Luque (1999:57-59), the diplomatic staff includes the Ambassador (Head of Mission); the Counsellor (who follows the ambassador); the Secretary (under the Counsellor); the Consul (under the Secretary), the

Attaché, etc. There is also the Locally Engaged Staff who carry out diplomatic tasks and functions in certain embassies.

Each type of client has its particular kind of documents related to his category.

#### **1.5.4. Types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients**

Based on the above discussion, one can deduce that there are two main categories of documents involved in diplomatic translation. Fuentes Luque (1999:59-60) distinguishes between chancery and consular documents. He defines chancery documents as “texts or documents aimed to serve as a vehicle for diplomatic communication between the given diplomatic mission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and vice versa”. Among these documents are official correspondences such as the “*Third Person Note*” (it is the most common document used to inform or advise about a particular issue, to obtain the support of the government for an international body or agency, to communicate the termination or commencement of a person’s functions as a diplomat, etc.; it is written in the third person) , the “*Letter*” (this document is a much more direct and personal means of diplomatic communication, usually addressed to the Minister; it is written in the first person and is normally signed by the Head of Mission), the “*Exchange of Letters*”, the “*Non-Paper*” (it is a document that originates from an official body (embassy, ministry, Directorate General, etc.; it has, intentionally, no official nature, and therefore it does not commit the body issuing it.), the “*Agrément*”(this is a document a diplomatic representative receives from the host government stating that there is no impediment to his taking up his mandate in the host country), the “*Memorandum*” or “*Aide-mémoire*”(this document is presented by a diplomatic mission to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explaining the situation of a given matter, including the position or viewpoint of the issuing country with regards to a specific issue, making particular suggestions, etc.; unlike Third Person Note, it is written in an impersonal way, excluding any courtesy formulae) (Fuentes Luque, 1999:60-61). Consular documents are “highly related to the field of legal and sworn translation” and include certificates, deeds, etc. Qualifications and academic transcripts are also included in this list, though they are rarer.



## **1.6. Proposed methodology**

### **1.6.1. Research design**

This research is a descriptive and exploratory study. The research intends to describe two factors, namely, diplomatic translation and the types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients. Generally, the exploratory aspect focuses on answering questions of 'how' and 'what'. As such, the research will explore how the need for translation is dealt with in diplomatic missions and what types of documents are translated in diplomatic missions in Pretoria.

This research is predominantly quantitative. Respondents at embassies and high commissions will complete a questionnaire comprised of eighteen (18) questions. A questionnaire is a list of questions designed in order to gather data from respondents in the framework of research. There are three reasons behind conducting a questionnaire for this study: firstly, a questionnaire provides an opportunity for "collecting structured data on a large scale" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013:152) and does not consume large amounts of time; secondly it aids in the collection of "exploratory data" and "large amounts of quantitative data" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013:152); and thirdly, data collected from a questionnaire can be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaire will be sent by email to 131 embassies and high commissions in Pretoria. Responses will be captured on a spreadsheet and used to provide a description of diplomatic translation services provided at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria.

### **1.6.2. Data sources**

Data sources for this research will include two types of data: secondary and primary data. Secondary data, which is comprised of academic literature, among others, will include academic texts, including journal articles and previous dissertations related to the subject of the research. This will be reviewed in chapter two, the literature review, in order to better conceptualise the research and to help define diplomatic translation.

Primary data for this research will include findings from the questionnaire. This data will be used to serve three purposes:

- i. Examining the way in which diplomatic translation is dealt with in diplomatic missions;
- ii. Identifying the types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients in Embassies in Pretoria; and
- iii. Identifying the clients of the diplomatic translation services.

### **1.7. Data collection techniques**

The research will focus on studying translation in diplomatic missions in Pretoria. This will be carried out using a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be sent to the Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Pretoria via e-mail in order to save time or dropped off if necessary.

### **1.8. Data analysis and interpretation**

Any participant-oriented research cannot ignore methods such as questionnaires or surveys, interviews and focus groups. For the analysis of the data, the research will use the participants' responses to questionnaire. The research will use predominantly quantitative data analysis for answering the problem statement.

### **1.9. Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the University. Respondents were informed that their participation is voluntary and they will retain anonymity and confidentiality if they do choose to participate. The survey commenced with a welcome page explaining this to respondents. In addition, the University required respondents to sign permission letters which were submitted to the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of data collection.

## **2. Outline of the structure of the dissertation**

### ***Chapter one: Introduction***

This chapter introduces the study. It deals with the research problem, the purpose of the research and the objectives of the research.

### ***Chapter two: Literature review***

The literature review discusses the existing literature related to the problem of the research, namely: diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator, clients of diplomatic translation, types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients.

### ***Chapter three: Research methodology***

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the research and the proposed methodology.

### ***Chapter four: Collection of data and research findings***

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the results of the data as collected and analysed. In addition, the key findings of the research will be discussed and compared with the literature review.

### ***Chapter five: Conclusion***

This chapter will discuss the importance and contribution of the research, the key findings and their impact on the development of the translation field, as well as possible avenues for further research.



### **3. Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the importance of translation in international bodies, specifically diplomatic translation at embassies in Pretoria. This discussion included the research problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives, the literature review, the proposed methodology in terms of research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, the outline of the dissertation, etc., elements to be discussed in a more in-depth manner in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

This literature review will include discussions using three main terms, namely, diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator, clients of diplomatic translation, and the types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients. These three terms represent the general framework of this research.

### 2.2. Diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.2.1. Definition of diplomatic translation

According to Fuentes Luque (1999:56), “diplomatic translation is translation that is performed in diplomatic missions (embassies, high commissions) and international organisations and the person who carries out that work is called a diplomatic translator”. In order to show the importance of translators in diplomacy, Delisle, as quoted in Roland (1999:1) states that thanks to translation and interpretation, we are all “contemporaries of every historical period and citizens of every country” irrespective of our status. The role played by translators and interpreters in political and diplomatic affairs is vital. Like every human, they take diplomats beyond their linguistic and cultural frontiers. Delisle goes on to say that “(t)he 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the age of rapprochement among nations. The global village would not have been conceived without the cohort of translators and interpreters who give a voice to the main players on the international scene” (Roland, 1999:2). Though they are ‘invisible’, language service providers’ presence at important meetings where diplomats seek to settle international disputes is essential; they contribute significantly to world peace and harmony through their translations, be it oral or written. Translators and interpreters play the role of go-betweens in international meetings bringing together people from different languages. For Roland (1999:7) “without their services, there could have been no ‘international relations’”.

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<sup>1</sup> The need for diplomatic translation is a relatively unexplored field of translation studies because not much has been written about it (which makes this study all the more important). What has been written about diplomatic translation (Ming-xing (2008), Ming-xing (2012), Davies (2001), Xu (2000), Tilford (1991)) deals with translation strategies and procedures, and not primarily with a needs analysis, which this study is.

### 2.2.2. The history of diplomatic translation

From the olden days to date, apart from ship commanders, interpreting brokers in maritime ports are the only ones to “have the right to translate documents written in foreign languages before commercial courts” (Delisle in Roland, 1999:1). For his part, Roland remarks that “many of the “scribes” so frequently mentioned in historical accounts were, in fact, translators or interpreters, as public notaries in Scandinavia, today, are required to be” (Longley 1968:2, as cited in Roland, 1999:10). In China, translators and interpreters were part of China’s first civil servants after “the introduction of Confucian-type examinations in 165 BC” (Ostrower 1965, 1:234, as cited in Roland, 1999:83). These language service providers worked in ten languages in China’s “tributary states” with which the Chinese empire had “foreign relations” at that time. There were two bureaus in charge of translation and interpreting: the *ssui kuan* was responsible for the translation of messages in foreign languages and the *hui t’ung*, the interpreting. It is after the translation of the foreign messages that they are transmitted to the emperor. Both institutions were merged into a single agency after 1748 (Roland, 1999:83). According to Roland (1999:121), at the Versailles Conference in 1919, during which the “Big Four” met 300 times over a period of 100 days and produced about 700 decisions, two preliminary Council sessions had been devoted to the issue of the language to be used at the conferences.” According to the French delegate, Georges Clemenceau, French should have been the only working language. The English-speaking delegates, Wilson and Lloyd George, disagreed and referred to the growing importance of the English-speaking world. The French delegate suggested that three languages (French, English and Italian) of the “Big Four” be used. After long discussions, they reached a compromise and agreed to use both French and English as equal official languages for the Conference and Treaty of Versailles; this decision put an end to over two centuries of French-language hegemony. To insist on the importance of translation and interpreting, Roland (1999:123) states that “Within the League, the Rules of Procedure for the Assembly decreed official equality of the two languages at meetings and in the drafting of documents”. Rule six of the Rules of Procedure of the League for the Assembly states that any delegate or member of the League of Nations is free to request the translation of the “League documents and publications” into another non-official language at his own expense (Pastuhov 1945:123, as cited in Roland, 1999:123). Such a



decision led the states to send delegates who understand and speak the two official languages to the League's meetings, thus renouncing the question of prestige (Shenton 1933:382, 384, as cited in Roland, 1999:123).

Kappeler (2001:201) describes the history of language use in diplomacy as follows: in Europe, the first language used in diplomatic communication (written and oral) was Latin. It was followed by French in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English became the second diplomatic language and later the first dominant one. During the same century, many countries demanded that their own languages be used in "diplomatic correspondence and joint diplomatic documents."

### **2.2.3. Diplomatic translation at international organisations**

Afkir (2013:3) argues that many diplomats and participants in international meetings speak different languages and are from cultures, which explains the strong need for translators (written and spoken) to facilitate communication. In this context she wrote that "(t)ranslation and interpretation at the United Nations play a very significant role in promoting diplomatic relations and facilitating communications" (Afkir, 2013:3). This idea is also shared by other researchers.

Nick (2001:40) remarks that the use of a translator/interpreter is expensive and despite his good command of both languages in which he works, he may not master all the topics of the negotiation or conversation, that is, of the communication. Afkir (2013:2) concurs with Nick (2001:40), when she argues that hiring translators does not fully solve the problem because the translators cannot always have mastery of the parties' cultures and he may not master all of the subjects (Afkir, 2013:2).

Fuentes Luque (1999:65) suggests that "diplomatic translators must have a vast wealth of knowledge and be very familiar with international affairs and in particular with the political, social and economic situation of their own countries (i.e. the host country and the country of the Embassy for which they work)." According to Cremona and Mallia (2001:2):

It is important for an interpreter working in the diplomatic field to follow closely world political, social and cultural events. Sources for these may include local and foreign newspapers, journals dealing with current affairs, news broadcasts, as well as a very good knowledge of history and geography.

Afkir (2013:3) supports this idea when she states that in the “domain of diplomatic translation, particularly at the United Nations, translators must be aware of the political, social and economic events that take place in their countries in particular and all over the world in general including the consideration of the specialized terminology and fixed expressions used.”

Cremona and Mallia (2001:1-4) describe the difference between the interpreter and the translator and the difference between consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. For them, the interpreter who works in the field of diplomacy is someone who makes use of the techniques of identifying key words in diplomacy taking into account the “topics and the situations” (Cremona and Mallia, 2001:2). Some of these key words are ‘globalization’, ‘framework’, ‘regulatory bodies’, and ‘sustainable development’ (Cremona and Mallia, 2001:2). They even go further and say that “in diplomacy, where the value of a word carries weight, it is particularly important to pay attention to idiom, innuendos, [and] nuances of meaning.” (Cremona and Mallia, 2001:3).

According to Cao and Zhao (2008:8), translation at the United Nations “plays an important political and practical role in the functioning of the organisation.” It “developed over the sixty years’ history.” The UN uses six official languages (English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Spanish) and two working languages, English and French. As one of the biggest international organisations in the world, the United Nations employs several hundred language and professionals such as interpreters, translators, editors, terminologists, verbatim reporters, reference assistants, proofreaders and copy preparers (Cao and Zhao, 2008:9-11). As far as the African Union which counts fifty-four (54) member states is concerned, there are six official working languages (English, French, Arabic, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Spanish) used during plenary sessions whereas only four (English, French,



Arabic and Portuguese) are used during committee meetings. This is so, because plenary sessions are bigger than committee meetings: plenary sessions gather Heads of State and Government and foreign delegations, which is not the case for committee meetings (Tohouenou, 2013:112).

Cao and Zhao (2008:9) discuss and describe many aspects of translation at the UN, such as problems faced by the translator in his work, the “peculiarities, the specific technical and stylistic requirements” determined by the nature of the UN and its functioning. In view of the peculiarity of translation at the UN, there are special phrases used. To confirm this, Cao and Zhao (2008:16-17) have this to say:

Some of the commonly used preambulatory phrases are :  
acknowledging, affirming, alarmed, approving, aware, bearing in mind, being convinced, believing, cognizant, concerned, confident, conscious, considering contemplating, convinced, declaring, deeply disturbed, desiring, determined, emphasizing, encouraged, endorsing, expressing, expecting, fulfilling, fully aware, guided by, keeping in mind, mindful, noting, observing, reaffirming, recalling, recognizing, referring, regretting, reiterating, stressing, welcoming, ...adopted, ...approved, ...considered, ...examined further, ...received, ...reviewed, ...with approval, ...with concern, ...with deep concern, ...with satisfaction, ...observing.

As far as, operative phrases are concerned, Cao and Zhao (2008:17) have listed some including:

accepts, adopts, affirms, appeals, appreciates, approves, authorizes, calls upon, concurs, condemns, confirms, congratulates..., considers..., decides, declares, deplores, emphasizes, encourages, endorses, expresses, notes, reaffirms, recognizes, recommends, regrets, reiterates, suggests, supports,

takes note of, urges, welcomes, ...its appreciation..., ...its conviction..., ...its regret..., its sympathy..., ...its thanks....

In the same vein, DiploFoundation (2016e:1) states that many factors explain the need for language service providers in international bodies. These include the awareness of linguistic rights of ethnic minority groups, especially in countries facing armed conflict in opposition to majority groups over the last century, the participation of an increasing amount of countries with non-international official languages involved in international affairs, the recognition by international organisations of member states' individual languages as "official or working languages for their proceedings, both oral and written" (DiploFoundation, 2016e:1). The other factor is "the 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights." DiploFoundation (2016e:1) states that "in diplomacy, now more than ever before, interpreters and translators are of vital importance." With respect to translation need in diplomatic missions and international organisations, Rudwin and Tomassini argue that linguistic rights represent a part of human rights claimed by all individuals, and in order to give them equal access to services in all domains of life, the establishment of an "interpreting profession...is one way of securing this basic civil right" (Rudwin and Tomassini, 2011:11).

Kappeler (2001:201) remarks that when the United Nations was established, it accepted the use of five official languages (Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish). To this list Arabic has been added. At the European Union, twelve languages representing all the twelve member states are used as official languages. Kappeler (2001:201) concludes that "[t]ranslation and interpretation have therefore become a major element in present-day diplomatic life".

Roger Chriss (as cited in DiploFoundation, 2016e:2) describes the role of the translator and says that "translators are language professionals and diplomats. Like diplomats, translators have to be sensitive to the cultural and social differences which exist in their languages and be capable of addressing these issues when translating." As such he joins Cohen (1991:6) who wrote about Ambassador Grew in Japan, who in addressing communication difficulties, said that the role of the diplomat is "to act first and foremost as an interpreter" of the culture of the country he represents and the one of the host country. According to Ambassador



Grew, quoted in Cohen (1991:6), "What really counts is the interpretation of the written word and of the spirit that lies behind it". Cohen (1991:7) states that "diplomatic negotiation consists of a process of communication between states seeking to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome on some issue or issues of shared concern." In such a negotiation, when the parties involved do not share the same language or culture, this may lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, doubt, or even affect the outcome of the negotiation that the diplomat should be aware of this. The interpreter or translator who is present at such negotiations must also be aware of the cultural differences when translating or interpreting. In other words, a diplomatic translator must have the qualities of a diplomat. Kappeler observes that a diplomat must be strong, extroverted, and healthy: of "robust constitution to stand the physical and mental strain put on diplomats in many situations." He must be "a well-balanced personality, good self-control, naturally curious, naturally courteous, have good manners, be interested in "understanding others and their manner of thinking" (Kappeler, 2002:1-2). Like diplomats, diplomatic translators "must have basic familiarity with history, law, economics, and political science, and have a multi-disciplinary academic knowledge" (Kappeler, 2002:2). To show that translators are diplomats, Roland (1999:41) states that "bilingual Greek scholars, steeped in Byzantine diplomatic lore" are the ones who taught the art of diplomacy to the Venetians, who then transmitted it "to the other Italian city-states, and thence to the capitals of Europe."

Nick (2001:39-41) briefly describes the use of language in diplomacy in the past and today. In order to safeguard international and intercultural communication between people who speak different languages, he suggests several solutions. First, speaking the language of one of the parties. Second, use a "third, neutral language". Third, use interpreters, and lastly, use "Esperanto, an international synthetic, artificial language" Nick (2001:40). Each of these solutions has its advantages and its drawbacks. For Nick, there is no diplomatic language. As shown by history, every language can be a diplomatic language; it is enough for a country to impose its hegemony if it becomes a global power at one time or another.

The Directorate-General for Translation (2010:6-59) describes the history of translation and the crucial role played by translators in the establishment of the European Union. Following the adverse consequences caused by World War II, the peoples of Europe felt the necessity



to group themselves together, be they enemies or friends. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established in 1952 following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1951. As European countries do not share the same language, the issue of the languages to be used has been raised. In view of the context, a single official language could not be imposed. Decisions then had to be taken to use the four languages of the six founding countries (France, German, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) as official languages (French, German, Dutch and Italian) for the Community's institutions to give equal chances to every citizen of the community to "understand the provisions and measures adopted by the Community and to acknowledge its linguistic and cultural differences" (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:9). Alongside the four official language services, there was one in charge of English. This English section was created because it is the "language most widely used at international level by heavy industry, in the scientific and technical literature and in the coal and steel trade, particularly by the major British and American trading partners" (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:12). With the entry into force of the treaties of Rome in 1958, the English language was added to the four official languages. According to the Directorate-General for Translation (2010:17), "one English translator, quickly followed by two more, was hired from the start, as had been the case with the ECSC, to handle communications with the United States, the United Kingdom and the largely English-dominated international scientific research community." In 1962, "although the United Kingdom was not part of the Community, the English-language translators also became permanent officials" (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:18). For the Directorate-General for Translation (2010:6), "union between the peoples of Europe would have been unthinkable without translation to build bridges." Thanks to translation, European "nation states have reached agreement and European citizens have contributed in the realization of the European Union" (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:6). Translators have worked hard since the creation of the Union and even since the existence of the ECSC in the early 1950s, allowing the Union to be within the grasp of all the European Union citizens through the dissemination of the European message and the expression of the concepts of the Community. Multilingualism is an important principle in Europe and a crucial element that makes the European Union unique, and translation plays an essential part in respect of the European identity. The Directorate-General for Translation of the Commission has facilitated the work in the Union thanks to the competence and

professionalism of its translators. At the European Community, translation is so important that it is “recognized as an integral part of the European Commission’s decision-making process” (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:30).

The number of translators increased as soon as new memberships were approved and an increase of the workload occurred. From time to time external translators were hired to help do the work (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:12). In the early 1960s, the language services of ECSC, Euratom (the European Atomic Energy Community) and EEC (the European Economic Committee) counted fifty translators each. The number of official languages changed with the admission of a new member. In 1973, the number rose from four to six; in 1981 it increased to seven after the accession of Greece; in 1986 from seven to nine with the accession of Spain and Portugal. On 7 February 1992, the Treaty on the European Union was signed in Maastricht and entered into force on 1 November 1993; this treaty reformed the functioning of the European Community (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:33). On 1 January 1995, Austria, Sweden and Finland joined the European Union bringing the number of official languages of the Union from nine to eleven. With the accession of ten other countries on 1 May 2004, the number of official languages rose to twenty; on 1 January 2007, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union, the Irish language became official on the same date; the number of official languages rose to 23. The language policy at the European Union is unique in the world in the sense that the EU today counts 24 official languages which enjoy equal status. These languages are: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene/Slovenian, Spanish, and Swedish. One Europe (2013:2), however, remarks that “(e)ven though all official languages are also theoretically considered working languages, in practice only three languages are widely and unofficially accepted as EU working languages-English, German and French”.

There are translation services in charge of coordinating translation activities in international organisations. The translation of documents follows a procedure at the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union Commission as well as the Pan African Parliament. As international and multi-language organisations they almost fulfil the same duties.



At the UN, one of the biggest international organisations in the world, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) is in charge of language services and the Documentation Division is the one directly in charge of translation. As stated by Cao and Zhao (2008:11), “the Division also provides reference and terminology services for authors, drafters, editors, interpreters, translators and verbatim reporters. It develops terminology databases that are available to users within the UN system and to the general public.”

At the EU, despite the fact that the Directorate-General for Translation is the in-house translation service of the European Commission, other EU institutions and bodies have their own translation departments; the various agencies have a translation centre in Luxembourg to carry out their translation work. One Europe (2013:2) confirms this and states:

There are several responsible bodies in charge of translation at the EU, such as the two Directorates General for Translation of the European Commission and of the European Parliament and the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union based in Luxembourg, which serve the EU agencies. The Centre currently has 210 staff members, 100 of them being translators. The other EU institutions also have their own translation units.

At the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission, “Commission translators work with three types of text: incoming, outgoing and internal documents (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:47). The English language department is the only one to receive incoming documents in all the official languages of the Union.

The Translation Department of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) is in charge of coordinating the activity of translation. Its functions, among other things, are to:

provide the link between translators and the various units of the PAP,  
receive and acknowledge receipt of documents to be translated,

prepare a checklist of working documents (ST and TT), identify suitable translators and/or interpreters for the translation of documents, store both ST and TT in a data base with appropriate file names bearing the initials of translators for easy identification and reference, identify and hire freelance translators and/or interpreters (from the database of the network of freelance translators from Member States of the AU) for sessions of the PAP, prepare any type of documents, materials and equipment required for conferences (Tohouenou, 2013:108).

As far as the Translation Department of the AUC is concerned, it is directly supervised by the Directorate of Conferences Services. This department fulfils almost the same duties with a slight difference. The Department of Translation at the AU:

organises, coordinates and supervises the activities of translators and related staff; designs and implements policies and plans regarding the activities of the Division; ensures the proper and faithful translation, revision, proof-reading and typing of documents; advises the Directorate on the acquisition of required translation tool software and reference books for the use of translators and revisers, with the ultimate objective of having a proper reference unit and database; develops a database of translators; ensures that a terminology database is developed by the linguistic units; assesses translators, revisers and secretaries and submit to the Directorate regular reports of their performance (Tohouenou, 2013:108).

It is not an easy task to translate or interpret bilingual or multilingual diplomatic texts. The challenges include equivalence, the deadlines, the workload, etc. Dealing with the difficulties met by translators and interpreters, Delisle argues that the brief historical overview “shows that language has always been more than a simple communication tool” (Delisle in Roland 1999:2). Despite the national prestige interpreters and translators have brought to the international arena, they must be careful in the choice of words they use, considering the



sensitivity of the world in which they work. Language is not an easy tool to handle; it is complicated, if a phrase is misused it can provoke a diplomatic incident (Delisle, as cited in Roland, 1999:2). Finding equivalent terms in the language(s) being translated into is not always easy because of the multicultural and multilingual nature of international organisations like the UN, the EU, the AU (African Union), etc. For the sake of diplomacy, negotiators do not always phrase what they convey in a direct manner in international instruments and other texts, which makes the work of the translator difficult. It is not up to the translator to clarify such ambiguous and vague words, either. Tabory and Sarcevic (as cited in Cao and Zhao, 2008: 8) confirm this:

There are no particular requirements as to the manner of negotiation or reaching agreement or the form of a treaty, and as it happens, in international diplomacy, negotiators resort to a compromise that glosses over their differences with vague, obscure or ambiguous wording, sacrificing clarity for the sake of obtaining consensus in treaties and conventions.

In order to solve the issue of equivalence, all the above-mentioned organisations create a terminology database. In this context, at the EU, it has been decided to create “a central terminology and research office to standardize vocabulary and avoid multiple translations of identical terms” (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:14).

With regards to the deadline, Cao and Zhao (2008:10) argue that “UN translators are required to work to tight deadlines and at the same time to produce translations of the highest standards of quality and accuracy.” The above is not exception to the rule at the EU or the AU. In order to solve the questions of workload, tighter deadlines, most international organisations recruit more permanent translators or hire freelance translators to help do the work. As far as the high cost is concerned, permanent translators are recruited to reduce the cost of translation, which, if done by temporary translators will involve greater expense for the same productivity. Other difficulties described by Cao and Zhao (2008:14) as translators at the UN are restrained to the length and volume of the documents and the “bureaucratic jargon and usage”. This bureaucratic language is also used at the European

Union. There are also linguistic problems due to the fact those who draft UN documents are not necessarily native English speakers.

### **2.3. Clients of diplomatic translation**

This section deals with clients of diplomatic translation in embassies, international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the Pan African Parliament.

#### **2.3.1. Clients of diplomatic translation at embassies**

Most of those who require translation services are employed at embassies. As stated by Fuente Luque (1999:57-59), the diplomatic staff includes the Ambassador (Head of Mission); the Counsellor (who follows the ambassador); the Secretary (under the Counsellor); the Consul (under the Secretary), the Attaché, etc. There is also the Locally Engaged Staff who carry out diplomatic tasks and functions in certain embassies.

#### **2.3.2. Clients of diplomatic translation at international organisations**

The same as is the case at embassies, it is those working for international who require translation services to conduct their duties. According to Cao and Zhao (2008:11) “(t)he Languages Service under the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) provides translations for some 50 bodies within the UN Organisation and other parts of the UN system”. For them, the main clients of the language services are: the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Conference on Disarmament, the International Law Commission, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This implies that diplomatic staff are the main clients of the diplomatic translation services. According to the Directorate-General for Translation (2010:12) at the EU, those who request translation services are the institutions of the European Community which is the European Union today. From the very beginning of the establishment of the Community, each institution has a “language service enabling it to meet its translation and interpretation needs” (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:12). Translation was done for the five institutions of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community



(EAEC/Euratom) established in 1957. These institutions include a Commission of nine members, an Assembly of 142 members, a Council of six members, an Economic and Social Committee of 101 and a Court of Justice of seven judges and advocates-general (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:15). Nowadays, the institutions of the European Union are the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Court of Auditors and the European Central Bank. These institutions represent the seven principal decision-making bodies. The agencies of the EU also request translations from the translation services. Among others, these agencies include the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the European Environment Fund, the European Training Foundation, the European Medicines Agency, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the European Aviation Safety Agency, the European Maritime Safety Agency, the European Railway Agency, the European Institute for Gender Equality, the European Chemicals Agency, the European Defence Agency, the Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Police Office, among others.

At the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the legislative body of the AU, most of the documents translated come from 'sources' which "in the context of the PAP refers to the Department of Legislative Business and the Department of Finance, Administration, Parliamentary Relations" (Tohouenou, 2010:109). The PAP "produces various types of documents covering the work of its ten Permanent Committees" (Tohouenou, 2013:110). These committees can be considered as the clients of the PAP because they request translations of the documents they produce. They include:

The Committee on Education, Culture, Tourism and Human Resources, the Committee on Co-operation, International Relations and Conflicts Resolution, the Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters, the Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs, the Committee on Transport, Industry, Communications, Energy, Science and Technology, the Committee on Gender, Family, Youth and People with disability, the

Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline, the Committee on Health, Labour and social Affairs, the Committee on Justice and Human Rights (Tohouenou, 2013:110).

As far as the African Union Commission is concerned, documents are translated for its commissions, directorates and departments which are:

The Commission for Peace and Security, the Commission for Infrastructure and Energy, the Commission for Political Affairs, the Commission for Economic Affairs, the Commission for Social Affairs, the Commission for Trade and Industry, the Commission for Human Resources, Science and Technology, the Commission for Rural Economy and Agriculture, the Directorate of Legal Affairs, the Directorate of Women Gender and Development, the Civil Society and Diaspora (Tohouenou, 2013:111).

Each type of client has specific kinds of documents to be translated related to his respective field.

#### **2.4. Types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients**

It must be noted that documents translated in diplomatic missions and international bodies are not necessarily the same and are not exclusively classic diplomatic documents.

##### **2.4.1. Types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients at embassies**

Fuentes Luque (1999:59-61) distinguishes the chancery and consular documents. The chancery documents are "text or documents aimed to serve as a vehicle for diplomatic communication between the given diplomatic mission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and vice versa" (Fuentes Luque, 1999:60). These documents include official correspondences such as the "*Third Person Note*", the "*Letter*", the "*Non-Paper*", the "*Agrément*", the "*Memorandum*" or "*Aide-mémoire*" (Fuentes Luque, 1999:60-61). Consular documents are



documents “highly related to the field of legal and sworn translation”; they also include certificates, deeds, etc.; qualification and academic transcripts, though they are rarer (Fuentes Luque, 1999:62). Kappeler (2001:201) distinguishes between formal diplomatic documents and multi-language documents. The formal diplomatic documents include the full powers (powers given to the Foreign Minister “to deal with foreign governments and to represent his government in international fora”) (Kappeler, 2001:201), the letters of accreditation (“always addressed to a specific destination like a head of state or government, foreign minister, secretary-general of an international institutions, etc.”) (Kappeler, 2001:201), the diplomatic notes, and the treaties. In the case of the diplomatic notes, they are “addressed by one entity to another”; they have “stereotyped beginnings” like “XXX presents its compliments to YYY and has the honour to...”; they also have “stereotyped ending” such as “XXX avails itself of this opportunity to renew to YYY the expression of its highest consideration” (Kappeler, 2001:202). Whatever the nature of the subject-matter, strong or not, a “courtesy language has to be respected” (Kappeler, 2001:202). The abovementioned documents can be classified among the chancery documents as described by Fuentes Luque (1999:60) above. Dealing with multi-language documents, Kappeler (2001:203) says that nowadays, diplomatic documents involving countries not speaking the same language “tends to be written in two or more languages.” For Kappeler (2001:203):

In bilateral relations a difference is made between authentic languages and unofficial translations. If two languages are both authentic, the interpretation problems have to be solved by reference to both. Unofficial translations on the other hand have no value of authenticity. Sometimes, the unofficial translation is in the language of one party which is not used in international relations.

#### **2.4.2. Types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients at international organisations**

Translation in international organisations is almost the same as in diplomatic missions even if the documents translated are not always the same. Sceberras Trigona (2002:1-2) describes diplomatic documents as the main source of diplomatic knowledge. Diplomatic

documents are highly important; they contain recorded diplomatic information. Cao and Zhao (2008:11-13) remark that diplomatic translation involves all official documents such as resolutions, meeting records, publications, agreements, decisions, legal instruments, correspondence at headquarters, statements, which are translated from and into all six official languages of the UN and issued at the same time. Some official documents are also translated specifically into German by the German translation section. There are also “reports from governments, individuals and UN bodies” (Cao and Zhao, 2008: 4). The content of UN documents includes various topics such as human rights, disarmament, codification of international law, environmental protection, macro and micro economics, transport, and trade protection. Translators of the UN's two working languages may also be asked to “draft summary records of UN meetings” (Cao and Zhao, 2008:4).

There are six groups of documentation issued by the UN, namely “documents for or emanating from its principal organs and subsidiary organs, official records of the principal organs and their subsidiary organs, publications other than official records, the Journal of the United Nations, public information materials, including publications, brochures and pamphlets, and non-symbol papers” (Cao and Zhao, 2008:6). They are classified under two types of documents. Type 1 are documents for or from its principal organs and subsidiary organs. They include “reports, memoranda, notes, analyses, studies and surveys, replies to questionnaires, working documents (agenda, draft resolutions and draft decisions, amendments), communications, addenda, corrigenda and revisions” (Cao and Zhao, 2008: 6). Type 2 documents include official records (series of printed publications relating to the proceedings of the principal organs of the UN) and printed publications of certain UN conferences upon specific decision of the General Assembly (verbatim or summary records of meetings of the organ concerned, documents or check-lists of document relevant to its discussions, and the reports to those organs of their subordinate or affiliated bodies, compilations of resolutions, certain reports of the Secretary-General, and other selected publications) (Cao and Zhao, 2008:6). According to Joscelyne (as cited in Tohouenou, 2013:110): “[a] translation department in any international organization (or for that matter in any standard in-house translation service, private or public) is expected to handle almost any type of document, from half-page memoranda to an occasional 900-page report.”



The role played by translators in the European Community is crucial. Translators ensure the smooth communication between the various departments of the institution. Not only do they translate the major treaties and related documents, but they also translate anything whenever needed. Among other treaties is the Amsterdam Treaty signed on 2 October 1997 which amended the Treaty that set up the European Community and the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union signed by the 15 Member States” (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:39).

The purpose of the Maastricht Treaty was to create the political and institutional conditions needed to allow the European Union to rise to the challenges of the future with regard inter alia to rapid developments in the international situation, the globalisation of the economy and its repercussions on employment, the fight against terrorism, international crime and drug-trafficking, ecological imbalances and threats to public health. This treaty marked the first appearance in European legislation of the expression ‘sustainable development’. The abovementioned goal cannot be attained without the work of the translators” (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:39).

According to the Directorate-General for Translation (2010:12), the documents translated are incoming and outgoing documents which include recommendations, decisions, individual opinions and correspondence addressed to businesses and Community institutions. The incoming documents in all the official languages of the Union received by only the English language department at the Directorate-General for Translation include Member States’ national legislation, periodic reports, State aid dossiers, letters from national and regional administrations, formal complaints to the Commission, and documents concerning infringements of the Treaties (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:47). At the European Union Commission (EUC), translators translate into their mother tongue. Documents translated are newspaper articles, letters from individuals, companies, pressure groups, local, regional or



national authorities and various stakeholders (Directorate-General for Translation, 2010:48). The Official Journal is also translated and published in the four official languages. At the European Commission, the documents translated are all legislation and related documents. At the preparation stage, there are the Green Paper, the White Paper, and Communications to other institutions; for the legislative initiative, they include proposals of Directives and Regulations of the Council or of the Council and the European Parliament (EP); as law maker, the documents include the Directives, Regulations and Decisions of the Commission (Garcia Soriano [no date]:13). There are also all working documents about any policy which might be needed by any Directorate General (ibid:14). In addition, there are documents related to the political responsibility of the Commission. This includes reports on different pieces of legislation to be submitted to other institutions, answers to the EP and speeches (ibid:15). Other documents are information documents for the general public such as answers to citizens' letters, booklets, and webpages.

At the African Union Commission (AUC) as well as the Pan African Parliament (PAP), most of the documents translated are, according to Tohouenou (2013:109) "minutes from previous meetings, protocols, treaties and agreements, speeches and others."

The diplomat has the obligation to know his country's agenda as well as the host country's, as does the diplomatic translator if we consider the description of the diplomatic translator made by Roger Chriss, (as cited in DiploFoundation, 2016e:2) who describes a diplomatic translator as both a language professional and a diplomat. Diplomatic documents comprise *Memoirs*, *Aide-memoirs*, *notes verbale*, *Procès-verbal of a meeting*, *Protocols*, '*treaties on visa abolition, cultural and sports cooperation*', *international agreements*, and *Memorandi of Understanding* (Sceberras Trigona, as cited in DiploFoundation, 2002:4-5).

## 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the body of literature and existing research on the subject (or related to the subject) of diplomatic translation. In view of the above, diplomatic translation can be defined as translation that is carried out in diplomatic missions such as embassies and high commissions, and the person who performs these translations in diplomatic missions is called a diplomatic translator. The clients of diplomatic translation are mostly the chancery and the consulate including the staff of the diplomatic mission. The translated diplomatic documents include the chancery documents (*Notes, Memorandum, Agréments, and Exchange of letters*, among others) and the consular documents (certificates, deeds and qualifications, among others).

In view of the literature review as a whole, the clients and types of translations at diplomatic representations are not necessarily the same as for international organisations, hence the need for this study.

The following chapter explores the methodology of the research.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This study is descriptive and exploratory and the present chapter will discuss the quantitative method used in data collection for this study. Various elements of the methodology, such as the research design, the research instruments, the data collection process used, as well as the ethical aspects of the study are described in this chapter.

### **3.2. Research design**

The research question determines the approach in dealing with a research. For this study, in which the research question is to describe the way diplomatic translation is dealt with at embassies in Pretoria, the most suitable approach to be used in this specific case is the quantitative approach.

According to Creswell (2013:xxiv), “[q]uantitative methods involve the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study”.

Lieber and Weisner (2010), cited in Tohouenou (2013:40) write that: “[t]he quantitative suit of methods represents the world through the use of numbers, variables, graphs, functions, analytic models”.

#### **3.2.1. Characteristics of quantitative research**

Quantitative research serves to quantify data and generalise results from a sample to the population of interest.

The most important characteristics of quantitative research include the following:

- ❖ Data is usually collected using structured research techniques such as questionnaires;



- ❖ “Data is in the form of numbers and statistics, often arranged in tables, charts, figures, or other non-textual forms” (Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Quantitative Methods [no author, no date]);
- ❖ “The results are based on large sample sizes representing the population of interest” (University of Southern California, 2017:1);
- ❖ “Researcher has a clearly defined research question to which objective answers are sought” (University of Southern California, 2017:1).

### **3.3. Research area**

Requests were sent via email to one hundred and thirty-one (131) diplomatic missions comprised of one hundred and nine (109) embassies and twenty-two (22) high commissions. Embassies and high commissions are both entities constituting diplomatic missions to South Africa. The difference between them is that an embassy is a diplomatic mission of one country to another country whereas a high commission is a diplomatic mission of one commonwealth country to another commonwealth country. Commonwealth countries are countries previously belonging to the British Empire, which are now independent. The head of an embassy is called an ambassador and that of a high commission is called high commissioner. In this total of 131 embassies and high commissions, only fifty-five (55) granted their permission to undertake research at their mission. Acquiring the permission of even the fifty-five missions that agreed was challenging. The researcher was obligated to follow up with many phone calls, even requiring the re-sending of requests via email. In most cases where the electronic channel was not successful, the researcher was required to travel to these diplomatic missions to hand over hard copies in person. In certain cases, permission was granted immediately, in others, it was necessary to follow up with the missions again to obtain permission, or the missions simply did not reply.

In spite of the lengths the researcher went to, some missions did not give their permission for the research to be conducted. According to some diplomatic missions representing English-speaking countries, it is not of any interest to participate in this study. Others indicated that they did not wish to participate without giving any reasons, while some provided reasons such as insufficient time available, or their mission’s system not allowing

students to undertake research there. Some indicated they were awaiting feedback from authorities. Others initially agreed, but never followed through with allowing the research to be conducted. In a nutshell, it is not easy to undertake research in diplomatic missions, these places are not particularly open to the public.

Most of the 55 embassies and high commissions that gave permission are located in Arcadia, Pretoria (the administrative capital of South Africa), in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. Others are located in other suburbs including: Hatfield, Menlo Park, Newlands, Sunnyside, Muckeleneuk, Brooklyn, Colbyn, Hillcrest, Waterkloof, Lynnwood, and Queenswood.

### **3.4. Research population**

Since the study is about the description of Diplomatic Translation at Embassies in Pretoria, quantitative data was collected from a group 54 embassies and high commissions in Pretoria using a questionnaire of eighteen (18) questions. Initially, the questionnaire was sent to the fifty-five (55) embassies and high commissions that agreed to participate in the study, but one withdrew, claiming they had an issue regarding availability. A designated member of the staff of each of these missions filled out the questionnaire.

### **3.5. Data collection**

Data consists of any information collected during the course of a research. According to Matthews and Ross (2010), cited in Saldanha and O'Brien (2013:20), data can be spoken or written, non-verbal, structured in different ways, produced by individuals or groups, be factual or representing opinions, and it can include the researcher's own reflections. Considering this definition and the quantitative nature of the study, to obtain the data needed to reach the objectives of this study, the researcher sent the questionnaires to the relevant embassies and high commissions. The questionnaires were completed by a designated member of the staff. Before sending out the questionnaires, all study participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study by signing a permission letter. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen (18) closed-ended structured questions with several options.



### **3.5.1. Data collection techniques**

In order to find answers to research questions, appropriate and reliable data need to be gathered.

### **3.5.2. Research instruments**

For the purpose of fulfilling the objective of this research - understanding the way diplomatic translation is dealt with at embassies in Pretoria - and in view of the quantitative research design, a questionnaire has been used as research instrument.

#### **i. Characteristics of questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a list of questions designed in order to conduct a survey in the framework of a research.

According to Matthews and Ross (2010), cited in Saldanha and O'Brien (2013:151), a questionnaire is "(1) a list of questions each with a range of answers; (2) a format that enables standardized, relatively structured data to be gathered about each of a (usually) large number of cases". The main benefits of selecting questionnaires are:

- Firstly, questionnaires are much less time consuming and faster;
- Secondly, questionnaires give chance to collect more structured data within a short period of time;
- Thirdly, data collected from questionnaires can be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively;
- In addition, questionnaires guarantee the anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of their answers.



## **ii. Development of questionnaire**

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher, who is a translator, with suggestions and feedback from the research supervisor through open discussion and via email and phone calls.

## **iii. Structure of questionnaire**

The questionnaire administered to representatives of embassies and high commissions comprised 18 questions in total, all of them closed-ended with several options. It was structured as follows:

- questions 1 and 2 focus on the name of the country and designation used to call the mission;
- questions 3 and 4 focus on the language service(s) used and how frequently they are used;
- questions 5 and 6 focus on the language(s) from which the services are mostly required;
- question 7 focus on the clients who require the services;
- question 8 focus on the profile of the interpreters (accredited or community interpreters) in the case of interpreting;
- questions 9 and 10 focus on the nature of the documents translated;
- question 11 focus on the reasons of translation required by the public;
- question 12 focus on the place where the translation/interpreting is done;
- questions 13 and 14 focus on the person who translates or interprets within the embassy or in the home country;
- question 15 focus on who interprets or translates in case the interpreting or translation is not done by an employee of the embassy or high commission;
- question 16 focus on the need of certifying by a sworn translator all translations required by the embassy or high commission for official purposes;
- question 17 focus on whether the embassy/high commission can provide all the language services it requires;

- question 18 focus on whether the embassy or high commission needs more information on professional language services (including accredited and sworn translators and interpreters) in South Africa.

### **3.6. Data analysis and interpretation**

For this study, data is analysed using the participants' responses to the questionnaire with a focus on quantitative data analysis in answering the problem statement. The data was captured in a spreadsheet for the purpose of quantifying and sorting data, creating graphs and possibly identifying trends.

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

Due to the fact that human beings are involved in this research as study participants, the study was subject to certain ethical considerations as far as the rights of those individuals, as well as those of the University of Pretoria were concerned. Therefore, Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the University of Pretoria. Respondents know that their participation is voluntary and they retain anonymity and confidentiality. The survey commences with a welcome page explaining this to them.

#### **3.7.1. Permission to conduct the research**

Prior to the study, the researcher requested permission to conduct the study from embassies and high commissions. This permission was granted by a permission letter they signed. Before signing the permission letter, the researcher informed all study participants about the contents of the study through a consent form and an introductory letter which explained the aim of the study.

### **3.7.2. Principles of research ethics**

#### **i. Respect for persons**

Respect for persons requires a commitment from the researcher to respect the dignity of all study participants, and their autonomy, and where the latter may be diminished, to ensure that their vulnerability is not exploited (Mack, N. et al., 2005, as cited in Goutondji, 2014:66). This principle requires the researcher's assurance that the privacy rights, anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants is respected. Participants' willing participation was obtained through a two-step process:

- Firstly, the researcher fully disclosed all elements of the study by informing all participants about the research, its nature, as well as the participants' right to participate in it, to refuse to do so or to withdraw from it at any time. To do so, this information was given to them through the participants' consent form, and the introduction and permission letters;
- The participants then gave their individual consent by completing and signing the permission letter. Then, the questionnaire was sent to every participant. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was respected as no names of any of the participants representing the embassies or high commissions were mentioned in the final report - the participants were referred to by labels such as "respondent".

#### **ii. Beneficence**

In this study, the researcher did not foresee any harm that could arise from the study; on the contrary, the researcher will provide the study participants with the full contact details of professional translators and interpreters if need be through their associations in South Africa or recommend these language service professionals to contact embassies and high commissions in South Africa.

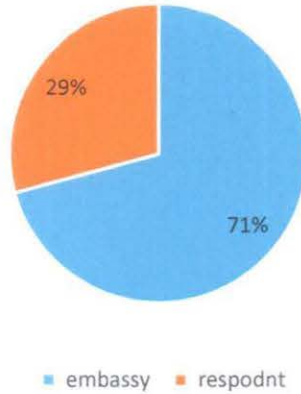


In order to prevent any difficulty, the researcher included her contact details (telephone number and email address), as well as those of the Head of Department of African Languages and the supervisor, in the consent form should the participants have wished to contact them for more information about the study.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the various elements of the research methodology. The main components included the research design, the study population, the research instruments and the data collection process. The discussion of these elements is followed by that of the key findings of the research in chapter four.

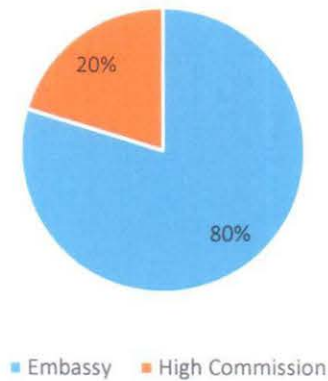
### Total number of embassies and respondents



*Question 1: Please indicate the name of the country you represent.*

In total, fifty-four (29%) countries out of the one hundred and thirty-one (131) participated in the study. Some diplomatic representatives did not wish to participate, partly because of time constraints and because, as Anglophone countries, they did not find any interest in participating in the study.

### Type of representation



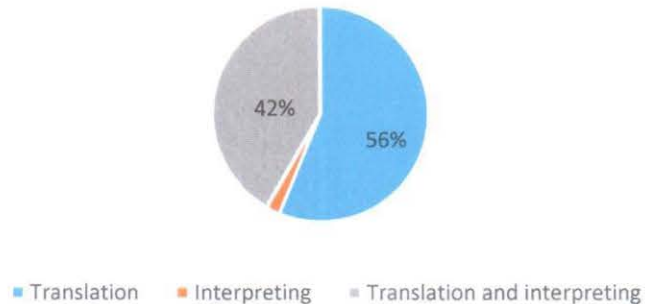
Question 2: *Please indicate whether you are responding from an embassy or high commission.*

(A) *Embassy*

(B) *High commission*

There were 43 (80%) respondents from embassies and eleven (20%) respondents from high commissions. There were initially 22 high commissions; several of which were for English-speaking countries and thus found no interest in participating in the study.

Language services



Question 3: *Do you make use of the following language services:*

(A) *Translation*

(B) *Interpreting*

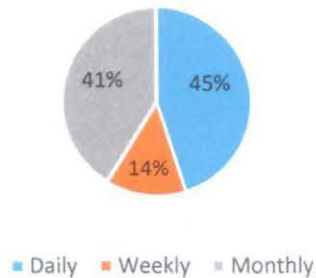
(C) *Translation and interpreting;*

Twenty-seven (56%) of the respondents indicated that they make use of translation, one (2%) of the respondents makes use of interpreting and 20 (42%) of the respondents make use of both translation and interpreting. Respondents 27, 28 and 52 did not respond as they do not make use of any



of the language services, with their missions either having staff fluent in English or representing an Anglophone country.

Language service frequency

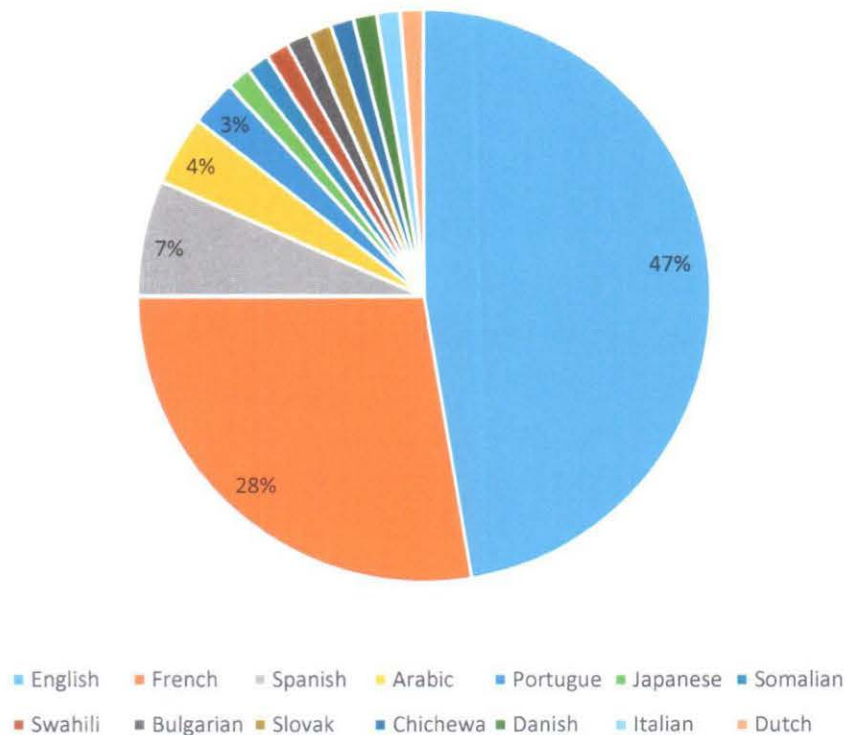


Question 4: *Do you make use of these language services:*

- (A) *Daily*
- (B) *Weekly*
- (C) *Monthly or less frequently?*

Twenty-three (45%) of the respondents indicated they make use of language services daily, seven (14%) of the respondents indicated that they do so weekly and 21 (41%) of the respondents indicated they do so monthly or less frequently. As in the previous question, three respondents (27, 28 and 52) did not answer because the diplomatic staff of their missions speak English or their missions belong to an Anglophone country.

### From which language



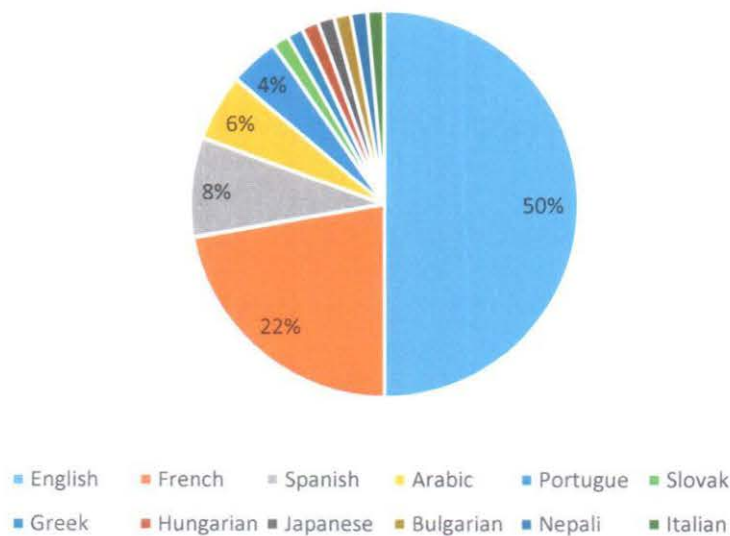
Question 5: Please indicate **from** which language(s) the services are mostly required, e.g. if you mainly require English to French translations, you will select English and vice versa.

Thirty-six (47%) of the respondents mostly required the language services from English; 21 (28%) of the respondents, from French; two (3%) of the respondents, from Portuguese; one (1%) of the respondents, from Dutch; five (7%) of the respondents from Spanish; three (4%) of the respondents, from Arabic; one (1%) of the respondents, from Somalian; one (1%) of the respondents, from Swahili; one (1%) of the respondents, from Bulgarian; one (1%) of the respondents, from Slovak; one (1%) of the respondents, from Chichewa; one (1%) of the respondents from Danish; one (1%) of the respondents from Italian; and one (1%) of the respondents from Japanese. In total, there were fourteen (14) source languages with a predominance of

English, French, Spanish, and Arabic. Again, respondents (27, 28 and 52) did not answer because the diplomatic staff of their missions speak English or their missions belong to an Anglophone country.

This result can be explained by the fact that English, French, Spanish and Arabic belong to the six official languages of the United Nations. The predominance of English is both due to the fact that English has been the language of diplomacy since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that the accreditation country (South Africa) is a predominantly Anglophone country, where many Francophone countries are accredited as well as Spanish and Arabic-speaking countries.

Into which language



Question 6: *Please indicate **into** which language(s) the services are mostly required, e.g. if you mainly require English to German translations, you will select German and vice versa.*

Thirty-six (50%) of the respondents responded that they require translations into English; 16 (22%) of the respondents, into French; six (8%) of the respondents, into Spanish; four (6%) of the respondents, into Arabic; three



(4%) of the respondents, into Portuguese; one (1%) of the respondents, into Slovak; one (1%) of the respondents, into Greek; one (1%) of the respondents, into Hungarian; one (1%) of the respondents, into Japanese; one (1%) of the respondents, into Bulgarian; one (1%) of the respondents, into Nepali; and one (1%) of the respondents, into Italian. The translation/interpreting is required to be done into twelve (12) languages, with a predominance of English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

This result can be explained by the fact that English, French, Spanish and Arabic belong to the six official languages of the United Nations. And the predominance of English is due to the fact that English is the language of diplomacy since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Respondents (27, 28 and 52) did not answer, again because either the diplomatic staff of their missions speak English or the mission represents an Anglophone country.

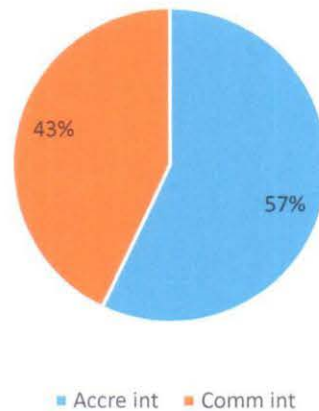
Respondent 16 requested information from the researcher about professional language services in South Africa upon collection of the questionnaire. According to him, for a document in Italian to be translated, the embassy had to wait for approximately a year since they did not know whom to send it to for translation, a situation that slowed down the course of things in this matter. For questions 5 and 6, it should be noted that respondent 49 caused some confusion by answering from English into English.

Findings pertaining to question 1 (*"Please indicate the name of the country you represent"*) reveals that 28 African countries, twelve (12) European countries, eight (8) American countries, five (5) Asian countries and one (1) Australian country participated in the study.

#### 4.2.2. Person who performs translations at/for diplomatic representations

There were four questions (8, 13, 14, 15) regarding the profile of those who perform diplomatic translation/interpreting and the place where these language services are done. These are formulated as follows:

In the case of interpreting, we mostly require



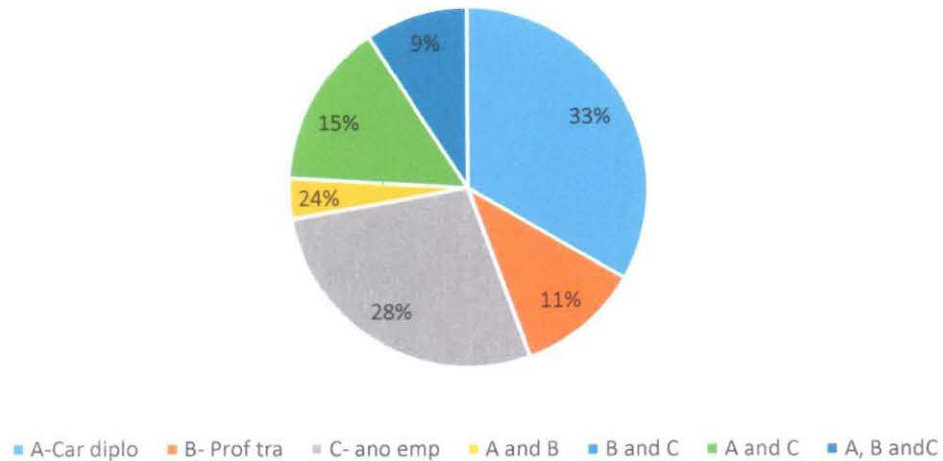
Questions 8: *In the case of interpreting, we mostly require:*

(A) *Accredited interpreters for official visits*

(B) *Community interpreters to assist our nationals in South Africa.*

For this question, sixteen (57%) of the respondents indicated that they mostly require accredited interpreters for official visits; 12 (43%) of the respondents mostly require community interpreters to assist their nationals in South Africa.

### Language services within embassy



Question 13: *Interpreting and translation done within the embassy is done by:*

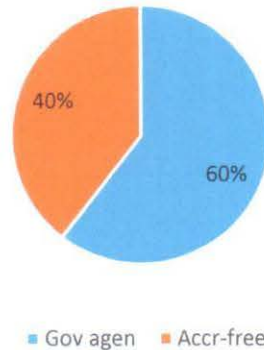
- (A) *A career diplomat*
- (B) *A professional translator*
- (C) *Another employee*
- (D) *A and B*
- (E) *B and C*
- (F) *A and C*
- (G) *A, B and C*

Here, eighteen (33%) of the respondents indicated that interpreting and translation are done by a career diplomat; six (11%) of the respondents indicated a professional translator; 15 (28%) of the respondents indicated another employee within the embassy/high commission; two (4%) of the respondents indicated a career diplomat and a professional translator; eight (15%) of the respondents indicated a career diplomat and another employee; five (9%) of the respondents indicated a career diplomat, a professional translator and another employee of the embassy/high commission. Only six (11%) of the respondents indicated that within the embassy the task is performed by a professional translator. The need for in-house translations may



be due to time or financial constraints, or possibly it is seen as part of the duty of a diplomat.

In the home country

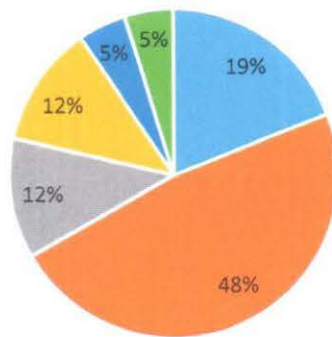


*Question 14: Translations done in the home country are mostly done by:*

- (A) A centralised government agency*
- (B) Accredited, freelance translators*

According to 26 (60%) of the respondents, translations done in the home country are mostly done by a centralised government agency, whereas seventeen (40%) of the respondents indicated that they are done by accredited, freelance translators. This result shows that translation in the home country is centralised; however, this process may be due to insufficient awareness of quality local language services.

### Language service in SA by someone outside embassy



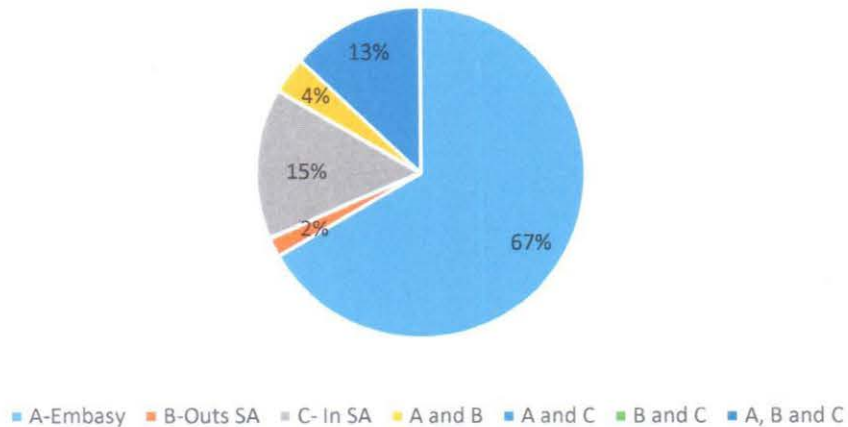
■ A- SATI ■ B-Swor tra ■ C-Mot ton ■ A and B ■ B and C ■ A, B and C

Question 15: Interpreting and translations by someone in South Africa who is not an employee of the embassy/high commission are normally done by:

- (A) Accredited members of the South African Translators' Institute
- (B) Sworn translators
- (C) Any mother tongue speaker
- (D) A and B
- (E) B and C
- (F) A, B and C

Eight (19%) of the respondents indicated that they use accredited members of the South African Translators' Institute; 20 (48%) of the respondents indicated that they use sworn translators; five (12%) of the respondents indicated that they use any mother tongue speaker; five (12%) of the respondents indicated that they use a combination of accredited members of the South African Translators' Institute and sworn translators; two (5%) of the respondents indicated that they use a combination of sworn translators and any mother tongue speaker; and two (5%) of the respondents indicated that they use a combination of the all three. From this, one can infer that there is a definite need for sworn translators at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria.

### Place where language service is done



*Question 12: Where is the translation or interpreting normally done?*

- (A) By someone working at the embassy/high commission in South Africa*
- (B) By someone outside South Africa in the country represented by the embassy or high commission*
- (C) By someone in South Africa who is not an employee of the embassy/high commission*
- (D) A and B*
- (E) B and C*
- (F) A and C*
- (G) A, B and C*

This is the summary of the answers received: thirty-six (67%) of the respondents indicated that translation was done by someone working at the embassy/high commission in South Africa, one (2%) of the respondents indicated someone outside South Africa in the country represented by the embassy or high commission, eight (15%) of the respondents indicated someone in South Africa who is not an employee of the embassy/high commission, two (4%) of the respondents indicated both translators within the



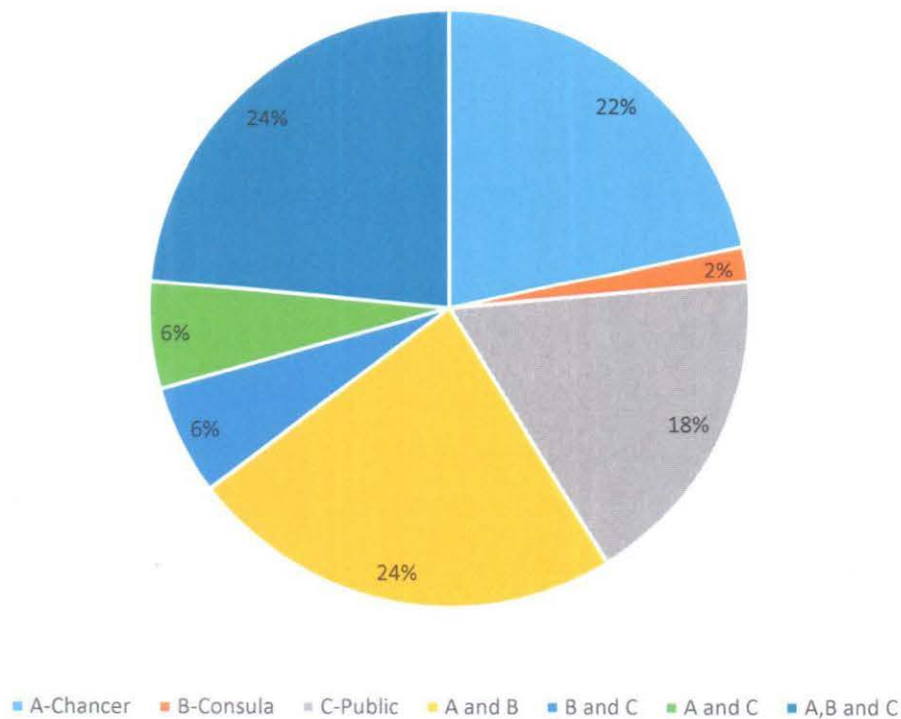
mission and in the country the mission represents, seven (13%) of the respondents responded by indicating translators within the mission and translators not employed by the mission but still in South Africa.

This graph highlights the predominance of language services being performed at the embassy by someone working at the diplomatic mission by one of its employees, illustrating the prevalence of in-house translation at embassies in Pretoria. Again, this may be because of time or financial constraints or lack of awareness of quality private language service providers.

#### 4.2.3. Clients of the diplomatic translation services

There was one question designed to explore this issue, formulated as follows:

Language service required by



*Question 7: The language services are mostly required by:*

- (A) The chancery*
- (B) The consulate*
- (C) The public*
- (D) A and B*
- (E) B and C*
- (F) A and C*
- (G) A, B and C*

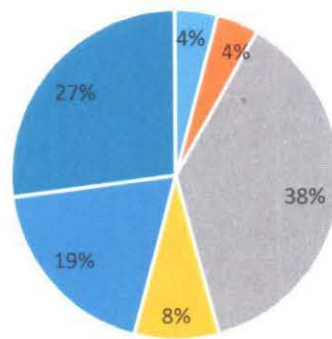
The feedback shows eleven (22%) of the respondents who indicated the chancery; one (2%) of the respondents indicated the consulate; nine (18%) of the respondents indicated the public; 12 (24%) of the respondents indicated the chancery and the consulate; three (6%) of the respondents indicated the consulate and the public; three (6%) of the respondents responded by indicating the chancery and the public; and twelve (24%) of the respondents indicated the chancery, the consulate and the public.

These results show that the main clients of diplomatic translation are, in order, the chancery, the consulate and the public.

#### **4.2.4. Types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients**

This section includes the different types of documents translated for the chancery, the consulate and the reasons why the public requires translations. Two questions dealt with this section, formulated as follows:

## Chancery translations



■ A- Comercial ■ B-Political ■ C-Routi dipl ■ A and B ■ B and C ■ A and C ■ A, B and C

*Question 9: Translation for the chancery is mainly:*

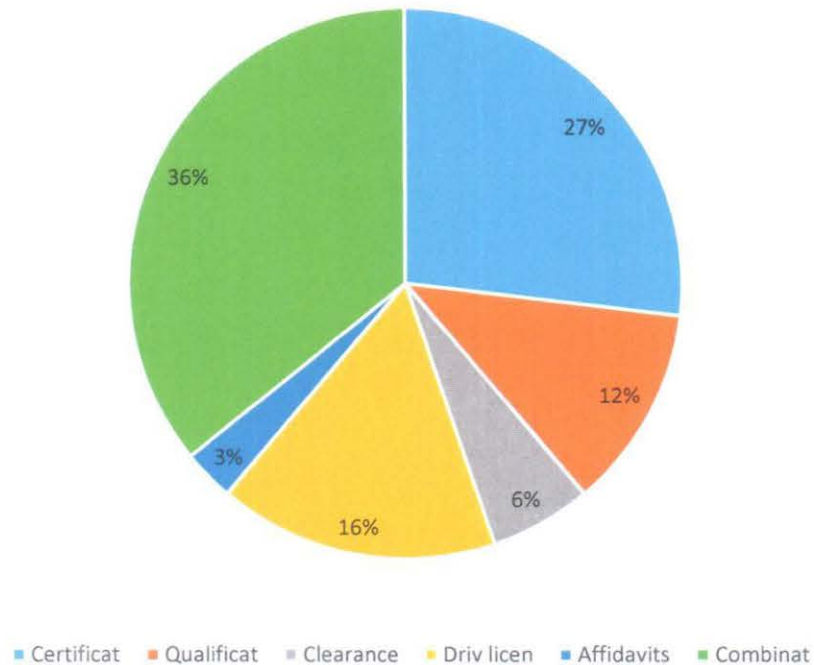
- (A) Commercial*
- (B) Political*
- (C) Routine diplomatic*
- (D) A and B*
- (E) B and C*
- (F) A and C*
- (G) A, B and C*

The answers from respondents show the following: two (4%) of the respondents responded in favour of commercial documents, two (4%) of the respondents indicated political documents, eighteen (38%) of the respondents indicated routine diplomatic documents, four (8%) of the respondents are in favour of commercial and political documents; nine (19%) of the respondents indicated political and routine diplomatic; thirteen (27%) of the respondents indicated a combination of commercial, political and routine diplomatic.



In view of the above, diplomatic translation mainly includes routine diplomatic documents and a combination of commercial, political and routine diplomatic documents, reflecting what is expected in the literature review.

Consular translations



Question 10: translations for the consulate are mainly:

- (A) Birth or other certificates
- (B) Qualifications
- (C) Police and/or tax clearances
- (D) Driver's licenses
- (E) Affidavits
- (F) A combination of the above.

For this question, eighteen (27%) of the respondents responded by choosing birth or other certificates, eight (12%) of the respondents indicated qualifications, four (6%) indicated police and/or tax clearances, 11 (16%) of

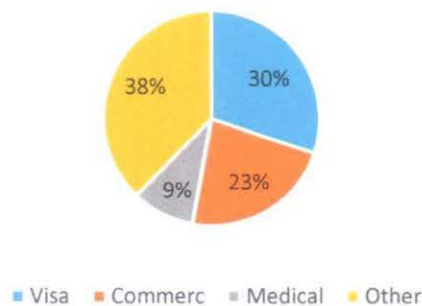
the respondents indicated driver's licenses, two (3%) of the respondents indicated affidavits and 24 (36%) of the respondents indicated a combination of the previous documents listed.

In view of the results above, it can be concluded that there is a somewhat equal need for the translation of most types of consular documents; however, birth or death certificates, etc., seem to require translation most.

#### 4.2.5. Reasons for translations required by the public

This part was answered by question 11 formulated as follows:

Reasons for public translation



*Question 11: Translations for the public are mainly:*

- (A) For the purpose of obtaining a visa*
- (B) For commercial reasons*
- (C) For medical reasons*
- (D) For other personal reasons.*

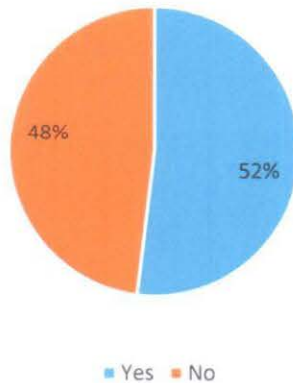
In answering this question, 16 (30%) of the respondents indicated that translation of documents is required for the purpose of obtaining a visa, 12 (23%) of the respondents indicated for commercial reasons, 5 (9%) of the

respondents indicated for medical reasons, 20 (38%) of the respondents indicated for other personal reasons.

Considering the feedback in this graph, the main reason for the public requiring translations are their various personal reasons and for the purpose of obtaining a visa. In fact, the public mostly requires the translation for certificates for the purposes of studies, job seeking, migration and obtaining work permits and dual citizenship. In addition, as mentioned by respondent 39, interpreting is required to assist nationals of a given country seeking a residence permit.

Furthermore, one question dealt with ancillary services that are required at diplomatic missions for translated documents. Another one dealt with the capacity of embassies/high commissions to cover all the language services they require, and the last one asks if embassies or high commissions need more information on professional language services (including accredited and sworn translators and translators in South Africa). These questions are formulated as follows:

Translations certified by a sworn translator

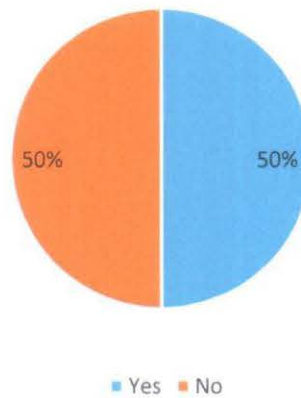


*Question 16: All translations required by the embassy/high commission for official purposes need to be certified by a sworn translator.*



The respondents had to answer with Yes and No. Twenty-seven (52%) of the respondents chose Yes and 25 (48%) of the respondents indicated No. The results above confirm the need for sworn translators at diplomatic missions in Pretoria. In fact, translations need to be certified by a sworn translator to give the translated document the same legal value as an official one. This certification, along with the stamp and signature of a sworn translator makes a translation equivalent to its original source document.

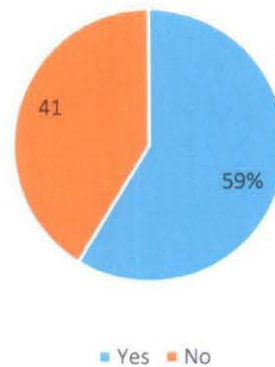
Cannot provide all language service



*Question 17: Our embassy/high commission cannot provide all the language services we require.*

The choice here also was between Yes and No. Twenty-seven (50%) of the respondents indicated Yes and 27(50%) of the respondents said No.

### More information on professional language providers



*Question 18: We would like to have more information on professional language services (including accredited and sworn translators and interpreters) in South Africa.*

For this question, 30 (59%) of the respondents indicated Yes and 21 (41%) of the respondents indicated No. This shows the interest in professional translators.

As far the interpretation of the data is concerned, some respondents found it difficult to complete the questionnaire because they represent English-speaking countries, in South Africa, which is a predominantly English-speaking country. Respondent 45 completed some questions taking the future into account because his mission does not have any translation service now. Respondents 26, 27, 48 left almost all the questions unanswered because they do not make use of any translation services at their embassies. Respondent 52 noted that he was unable to answer most questions because they do not have translation departments, neither in the Ministry of International Affairs nor the Office of the President. Documentation received from Francophone countries is usually accompanied by a version translated into English. In cases where they receive documentation in French, they send it back to those francophone countries to be translated into English, as these countries always have translation services available. Respondents 16 and 48 noted that both French and English

are official languages in their respective countries. They, therefore write and speak English fluently.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the study carried out at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria. The data collected from their feedback is analysed and the key findings discussed. Only about a third of diplomatic representations in Pretoria consented to participating in the study. Many Anglophone representatives declined to participate, since they do not have any translation requirements. Of the diplomatic representations who responded, 80% are embassies and the remaining 20% are high commissions. In terms of language services requirements, 56% require translation services, 42 % translation and interpreting and 2% interpreting services. As far as frequency is concerned, 45% of respondents require language services on a daily basis, 14% on a weekly basis and 41% on a monthly basis. Translation is mostly required from the following languages: English, French, Spanish and Arabic. For interpreting, 57% of respondents required the services of accredited interpreters for official visits, whereas 43% required the services of community interpreters to assist foreign nationals in South Africa. Language services within the embassy were mostly provided by career diplomats, then by professional language practitioners, then by other employees. Where translation was done in the home country, it was done by government agencies (60%) and freelance translators (40%). Where translation was done in South Africa by someone outside the embassy, it was done by freelance sworn translators, SATI-accredited translators or any mother tongue speaker. Most respondents indicate that translations done in South Africa are done within the embassy (67%), although 13% of all translations are done outside of South Africa. The chancery, consulate and the public are by far the greatest clients of translation services. In terms of the types of documents from the chancery that require the translation, the majority is made up of routine diplomatic documents, followed by commercial and political documents. Documents from the consulate that require translation are mainly an equal combination of all types of documents, with a larger percentage consisting of certificates and driver's licenses (16%) and qualifications (12%). Translations required by the public are mainly required for visa, commercial and medical purposes. Approximately 52% of all



translations are required to be sworn translations. Only 50% of diplomatic representations can provide for all of their language services requirements. 59% of respondents indicated that they would like to have more information on local professional language services.

Ultimately, the researcher can conclude that: firstly, language services such as translation and interpreting are provided at embassies in Pretoria, with a greater focus on translation. Secondly, translation is done more in-house translation than it is outsourced. Thirdly, there is a greater need for sworn translators at embassies. Finally, there is a need to provide more information on professional language practitioners and their associations, such as SATI, to diplomatic missions in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into four parts: the conclusion, the discussion of the key findings, the limitations of the study and the recommendations.

### 5.1. Conclusion

This research describes the diplomatic translation at embassies/high commissions in Pretoria. The study was divided into five main chapters.

Chapter one focused on the research problem, which is how diplomatic missions in Pretoria deal with translation needs; the purpose of the study, which is to investigate and describe diplomatic language services at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria, with the intention of contributing positively by filling a gap of knowledge in the field of language services as a profession. Chapter one, which introduced the study, also dealt briefly with the literature review whose three main topics were diplomatic translation and the diplomatic translator, the clients of diplomatic translation, and the types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients. In addition, chapter one dealt with the proposed methodology including the research design, data sources (primary and secondary data), data collection techniques and the use of a questionnaire, data analysis and interpretation using the quantitative method, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter two provided an overview of existing literature by previous researchers and translators related to the research problem, namely: diplomatic translation and the role of the diplomatic translator, the clients of diplomatic translation, and the types of diplomatic translation services required by the various clients. This chapter discusses the secondary data, including academic references, journal articles and previous dissertations related to the subject of the research. This chapter defines the diplomatic translation, shows the importance of translation/interpreting in diplomatic missions and international bodies such as embassies and high commissions, the United Nations and its agencies, the European Union, the African Union, and the Pan African Parliament.

Chapter three discussed the research methodology. This section mainly deals with the research design, the research area and population, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and the ethical considerations.

As far as chapter four is concerned, it analyses and discusses the results of the data as collected. As can be seen from the findings, translation is extremely important in diplomatic missions in Pretoria. Translations are mostly done by someone working at the embassy/high commission in South Africa. The clients of diplomatic translation are, essentially, the chancery and the consulate. Documents translated are mostly chancery and consular documents. The findings also show that there is a real need for sworn translators at embassies in South Africa. The public requires translation for the purpose of obtaining a visa and other personal reasons. Translations done in the home country are also mostly done by a centralised government agency. The findings also showed a strong need for more information on professional language services including accredited and sworn translators and interpreters in South Africa.

## **5.2. Discussion of the key findings**

In spite of the limited participation from embassies/high commissions, this study proved to have fulfilled the expectations. Thanks to the feedback given by all of the respondents, the key findings show that diplomatic translation indeed performed at embassies, confirming the need for translators at embassies/high commissions in Pretoria. Translation or interpreting at the diplomatic missions is more commonly done in-house than it is outsourced. Translation in the home country is centralised by the government. The clients of the diplomatic translation are the chancery, the consulate and the public. The main chancery documents translated are routine diplomatic documents. The main consular documents translated are birth or other certificates and driver's licenses. Ancillary services, such as the certification of translated documents by sworn translators, are performed at embassies in Pretoria. These results are congruent with the research problem, which is to describe the way in which diplomatic translation is dealt with at embassies and/or high commissions in Pretoria.



Furthermore, in view of the results of the research, the researcher observed that diplomatic missions in Pretoria, need sworn translators to translate their documents or to certify documents which have already been translated. Participating high commissions and Anglophone embassies found it difficult to complete the survey due to their lack of a need for translation services. The translation is performed by a career diplomat at some embassies and by a professional translator at some others. Embassies/high commissions need more information on professional language service providers including SATI.

Compared to existing literature, which deals with translation strategies and procedures, this study deals with a needs analysis (which is relatively unexplored within the field of translation studies). This data shows the way diplomatic translation is dealt with and the extant need for more sworn translators than freelancers, as well as for more information on professional language professionals to be furnished to embassies in Pretoria. The findings of this research are an important contribution in the field of translation as a profession, which can benefit professional language practitioners in South Africa.

### **5.3. Limitations of the study**

Despite the fact that this study fulfills its stated objectives, it presents some limitations. These mainly concern the limited participation of diplomatic missions in the study. Various reasons explain this situation:

- Firstly, there is more participation from non-English speaking countries, especially Francophone countries than from English-speaking embassies and high commissions (limited in number and using English as official language). The country of accreditation, South Africa, has English as one of its working and official languages. So, all other countries which use other languages are obliged to communicate with the host country in English, hence their use of translation services and high rates of participation in the study. In addition, very limited participation from Arabic countries, regardless of their official language, is to be noted.
- Secondly, the data collection procedure was very long. The University required the prior signing and collection of permission letters from the embassies and high

commissions before obtaining final approval from the Research Ethics Committee, following which the questionnaire would have been sent.

- Thirdly, the study was conducted in an area difficult to access. Certain diplomatic missions, fearing for their security, questioned whether the researcher wanted to use their confidential documents involving bilateral cooperation. Some, who perhaps did not thoroughly read the consent form and permission letter explaining the study, or did not understand these, assumed that the researcher was seeking employment at their mission rather than attempting to conduct this study.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

It appears that the realm of diplomatic translation at embassies and high commissions is largely untapped. In the light of the conclusion above, the following recommendations will be made, especially towards SATI (South African Translators' Institute) as well as for future research:

- There is an opportunity for SATI to promote local language practitioners among embassies and high commissions in Pretoria.
- As this study is to describe diplomatic translation and bring a contribution to the profession of language services such as translation and interpreting, it is highly recommended to language professionals regardless of their languages, to send their details to diplomatic missions, but especially those working in French, English and Spanish, as, the findings show that English and French are the languages most in demand in Pretoria.
- Professional language practitioners are encouraged to read the content of this research in order to know whether they are able to assist the embassies and high commissions.
- Finally, it will be better for future research to focus more on non-English speaking embassies to gather more useful data, save time and energy and increase the participation rate.

This chapter concludes the study by discussing the key findings and their impact on the development of the translation /interpreting profession in South Africa, as well as possible avenues for further research. Finally, this chapter ends with the limitations of the study as well as some recommendations.



## Appendices

The following documents are appended:

- Appendix A: Consent form
- Appendix B: Letter of introduction
- Appendix C: Permission letter
- Appendix D: Questionnaire

## APPENDIX A

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Diplomatic Translation at Embassies in Pretoria**

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT, AND WHAT PARTICIPATION INVOLVES:**

Nowadays, the need for language service providers becomes more and more important in all domains of life, especially in international bodies where people speak different languages. Embassies are not exceptions to the rule. Since in most of the cases the various states don't share the same official language, the use of a translator/interpreter becomes a necessity and crucial in order to facilitate communication and avoid misunderstandings.

This research will investigate the availability of language services such as translation and interpreting at embassies in Pretoria. The aim of this study is to offer a description of diplomatic language services available at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria based upon an electronic survey.

The survey will cover topics such as:

- The nature of diplomatic translation;
- clients of diplomatic translation services;
- how translation is dealt with in the various diplomatic missions in Pretoria;
- the language services offered by the particular diplomatic mission (if any); and

- the ancillary services that are required at diplomatic missions for translated documents.

This study will encompass 131 Embassies and High Commissions accredited to South Africa. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute positively in filling a gap of knowledge in the field of language services profession.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participants' involvement will be to answer the questions in the attached electronic questionnaire. Any information provided is strictly confidential, and will be used only for academic and professional purposes. Your responses will not identify you or your Embassy in any manner. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage.

#### **Investigator Contact Details:**

Name: Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL  
Department of African Languages  
University Address: University of Pretoria  
Pretoria, South Africa  
Email: dgnakipauline@yahoo.fr  
Telephone: +27 81 0715342

#### **CONSENT STATEMENT:**

I, the undersigned, ..... (full name), representing the Embassy of ..... ( name of the Embassy) agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity and that of the Embassy will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Signature of participant: .....

Signed at ..... on .....



**Please note:** if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Supervisor). However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

**Programme Director – Translation and Interpreting Programme Contact Details:**

Name: Renée Marais  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
Tel: 012 420 4592  
Email: [renee.marais@up.ac.za](mailto:renee.marais@up.ac.za)

**Contact information of my supervisor:**

Name: Dr Helena Kruger-Roux  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
Tel: 0834575822  
Email: [dr.hc.roux@gmail.com](mailto:dr.hc.roux@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX B

**Study Title:** DIPLOMATIC TRANSLATION AT EMBASSIES IN PRETORIA

**Researcher:** Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL

Translator at the Embassy of Benin, Pretoria  
900 Park Street, Arcadia

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear prospective participant

Before agreeing to participate in this research, I strongly encourage you to read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose and procedure of the study. It also describes the benefits of the study.

#### Purpose and Procedure

This study is designed to investigate the way in which diplomatic translation is dealt with at Embassies in Pretoria. This research will investigate the availability of language services such as translation and interpreting at Embassies in Pretoria and whether these services are provided internally, centrally or outsourced. The aim of this study is to offer a description of diplomatic language services available at embassies and high commissions in Pretoria.

Your participation in the study involves completion of a survey that asks you basic questions about the language services you offer at your Embassy. The completion of the questionnaire will be done electronically and sent back to the researcher's email address which is: [dgnakipauline@yahoo.fr](mailto:dgnakipauline@yahoo.fr). It will not take more than five (5) minutes of your time.

I am conducting this study to learn about this question since it has not been studied in the past.

### Benefits

Your participation in this survey will contribute positively in filling a gap of knowledge in the field of language services profession. The information could assist freelance language practitioners in determining whether their services are relevant to/required by the missions.



## APPENDIX C

### PERMISSION LETTER

Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL  
Translator at the Embassy of Benin, Pretoria  
900 Park Street, Arcadia

**RE:** Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Ms Bio Guene Djibril,

We hereby grant permission to you to conduct a research study at our Embassy which title is: **Diplomatic Translation at Embassies in Pretoria.**

We have designated Mr./Ms..... one of the members of my staff to complete your electronic survey including eighteen (18) questions.

You can follow-up with a telephone call next week.

Sincerely,

Approved by:

-----  
Print your name and title here

-----  
Signature

-----  
Date

## APPENDIX D

### QUESTIONNAIRE

You have been selected to participate in an official master's research project in the Translation and Interpreting Programme of the University of Pretoria. The researcher is Mrs Gnaki Pauline BIO GUENE DJIBRIL. Mrs BIO GUENE DJIBRIL has obtained research ethics clearance from the University.

Participation in the survey is voluntary, but it will help the researcher to describe diplomatic translation at embassies and/or high commissions in Pretoria.

Please be assured that all information collected will be anonymised (only the researcher and possibly her supervisor will know who it was submitted by) and it will not be made available to anyone else.

It should take you approximately 5 minutes to answer the questions.

1. Please indicate the name of the country you represent.

---

For the following questions, please circle the letter (A,B,C, etc.) preceding the most appropriate answer:

2. Please indicate whether you are responding from an embassy or high commission.

A

Embassy

B

High commission

3. Do you make use of the following language services:

A

Translation

B

Interpreting

C

Translation and interpreting

4. Do you make use of these language services?

A

Daily

B

Weekly

C

Monthly or less frequently

5. Please indicate **from** which language(s) the services are mostly required, e.g. if you mainly require English to French translations, you will select English and vice versa.

6. Please indicate **into** which language(s) the services are mostly required, e.g. if you mainly require English to German translations, you will select German and vice versa.

7. The language services are mostly required by ...

A

The chancery

B

The consulate

C

The public

D

A and B

E

B and C

F



A and C

G

A, B and C

8. In the case of interpreting, we mostly require...

A

Accredited interpreters for official visits

B

Community interpreters to assist our nationals in South Africa

9. Translations for the chancery are mainly...

A

Commercial

B

Political

C

Routine diplomatic

D

A and B

E

B and C

F

A and C

G

A, B and C

10. Translations for the consulate are mainly...

A

Birth or other certificates

B

Qualifications

C

Police and/or tax clearances

D

Driver's licenses

E

Affidavits

F

A combination of the above

11. Translations for the public are mainly...

A

For the purpose of obtaining a visa

B

For commercial reasons

C

For medical reasons

D

For other personal reasons

12. Where is the translation or interpreting normally done?

A

By someone working at the embassy/high commission in South Africa

B

By someone outside South Africa in the country represented by the embassy or high commission

C

By someone in South Africa who is not an employee of the embassy/high commission

D

A and B

E

B and C

F

A and C

G

A, B and C

13. Interpreting and translation done within the embassy is done by...

A

A career diplomat

B

A professional translator

C

Another employee

D

A and B

E

B and C

F

A and C

G

A, B and C



14. Translations done in the home country are mostly done by

A

A centralised government agency

B

Accredited, freelance translators

15. Interpreting and translations by someone in South Africa who is not an employee of the embassy/high commission are normally done by

A

Accredited members of the South African Translators' Institute

B

Sworn translators

C

Any mother tongue speaker

D

A and B

E

B and C

F

A, B and C

16. All translations required by the embassy/high commission for official purposes need to be certified by a sworn translator.

Y

Yes

N

No

17. Our embassy/high commission cannot provide all the language services we require.

Y

Yes

N

No

18. We would like to have more information on professional language services (including accredited and sworn translators and interpreters) in South Africa.

Y

Yes

N

No

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