

A Corpus Based Analysis of Explicitation and Neutralization Strategies in ECOWAS French Translations of Nigerian Political Discourse

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Abstract— This paper investigates the translation strategies employed in rendering Nigerian political discourse into French for dissemination within the Economic Community of West African States. Using a corpus based approach, the study examines a specialized collection of ECOWAS official documents, policy briefs, and communiqués translated from English Nigerian political texts into French between 2015 and 2023. The analysis focuses on two principal translation strategies: explicitation, whereby implicit information in the source text is made explicit in the target text, and neutralization, whereby culturally specific or politically charged terminology is rendered more neutral or generic. The findings reveal systematic patterns in how Nigerian political concepts, particularly those rooted in local idioms, proverbial expressions, and culturally specific institutions, are transformed in translation. Explicitation strategies are frequently employed to clarify opaque cultural references for a diverse West African francophone audience, while neutralization strategies are deployed to manage politically sensitive content and to conform to the diplomatic register of ECOWAS discourse. The study contributes to the growing field of African translation studies and offers insights into the linguistic mediation of political communication in multilingual regional organizations.

Keywords: Translation studies; corpus linguistics; ECOWAS; Nigerian political discourse; explicitation; neutralization; French language; political translation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States represents one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the world, encompassing fifteen member states with hundreds of indigenous languages alongside the official languages of English, French, and Portuguese inherited from colonial rule. As Bandia (2014) has observed, translation in such contexts functions not merely as a technical necessity but as a fundamental mechanism for regional integration, policy coordination, and political communication. The translation of political discourse from Nigeria, the region's most populous nation and dominant economy, into French for consumption across francophone West Africa constitutes a particularly significant site of linguistic and cultural mediation (Warekoromor, 2018; Warekoromor, et al., 2025).

Nigerian political discourse is characterized by distinctive features that pose considerable challenges for translation. It draws heavily upon the rich oral traditions of the country's diverse ethnic groups, incorporating proverbs, metaphors, and idiomatic expressions that carry deep cultural resonance (Ogurinka & Chimene-Wali, 2026; Edung, et al 2026; Ndifon, et al 2025). As Ogunmodede (2022) has documented, proverbs serve multiple functions in Nigerian political rhetoric: they lend authority to arguments, they encode cultural wisdom, they create intimacy with audiences, and they allow speakers to address sensitive topics indirectly. Nigerian political discourse also employs Nigerian Pidgin English as a vehicle for reaching mass audiences, mixing it with standard English in ways that create complex registers of political communication. Igboanusi (2020) notes that Pidgin cuts across ethnic divisions, allowing politicians to address diverse communities in a language that feels accessible and authentic. Additionally, the discourse references institutions, practices, and historical experiences that are specific to the Nigerian context and may have no direct equivalents in francophone West Africa.

When such discourse is translated for ECOWAS purposes, translators must make strategic decisions about how to render these culturally specific elements for an audience that shares some regional context but not the full depth of Nigerian cultural knowledge. This study examines two translation strategies that are particularly relevant to this context: explicitation and neutralization. Explicitation, a concept extensively theorized in translation studies, refers to the process by which information that is implicit in the source text is made explicit in the target text. As Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) originally defined it, explicitation involves making explicit in the target language what remains implicit in the source language because it is apparent from the context or situation. Neutralization, a less frequently studied but equally important strategy, involves rendering culturally specific or politically charged terms in more neutral, generic language that avoids the particularities of the source context.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows. First, what types of Nigerian political discourse elements most frequently trigger explicitation strategies in ECOWAS French translations? Second, what types of elements most frequently trigger neutralization strategies? Third, what patterns can be observed in the linguistic and textual realizations of these strategies across the corpus? Fourth, what do these patterns reveal about the assumptions translators make about their francophone West African audience and about the functions of translation in the ECOWAS context?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to several intersecting fields. For translation studies, it extends the empirical investigation of explicitation and neutralization to a new and under researched context, providing corpus based evidence of how these strategies operate in the specific domain of political translation. As Baker (2018) has argued, understanding how translation functions in political contexts is essential for comprehending the role of language in shaping conflict and cooperation. For African linguistics, it illuminates the processes by which African political discourse is mediated across the colonial language divide that continues to shape communication on the continent. For political science and regional integration studies, it offers insights into how linguistic choices shape the circulation of political ideas and the construction of a shared regional political discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Explicitation in Translation Studies

The concept of explicitation has occupied a central place in translation studies since Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) first introduced it in their comparative stylistics of French and English. Their initial formulation focused on the linguistic necessity of clarifying elements that would be ambiguous if translated literally. Subsequent scholars have refined and expanded this concept. Malmkjaer (2020) proposed a more rigorous definition, distinguishing between explicitation as a translation strategy and explicitness as a textual property. She argued that scholars should focus on translatorial explicitation, instances where a translator introduces explicit material that has no linguistic trigger in the source text, rather than on obligatory explicitation required by grammatical or syntactic differences between languages.

The most influential contribution to the study of explicitation came from Blum Kulka (1986), who proposed what has become known as the explicitation hypothesis. She argued that the process of translation inevitably involves shifts in cohesion and coherence that result in a more explicit target text, regardless of the specific language pair involved. This hypothesis has been tested and refined through numerous empirical studies. Kruger (2021), in a recent corpus based study of academic texts, found support for the claim that translated texts tend to be more explicit than their sources, though the

degree and nature of explicitation vary across text types, language pairs, and translation contexts.

Recent corpus based studies have provided more nuanced understandings of explicitation. Baumgarten and Özçetin (2019) distinguish between different types of explicitation, including obligatory explicitation required by target language norms, optional explicitation reflecting translator choices, and pragmatic explicitation aimed at facilitating reader comprehension. Olohan (2021) has examined how explicitation interacts with other translation strategies and how it varies across different genres and domains.

Neutralization as a Translation Strategy

Neutralization has received less systematic attention in translation studies than explicitation, but it is increasingly recognized as a significant strategy in specific translation contexts. Wright (2020) defines neutralization as involving the rendering of culturally specific, ideologically charged, or emotionally loaded source text elements in more neutral, generic, or standard target language forms. In the context of political translation, neutralization often serves to manage sensitive content. Schäffner (2018) has shown that translators may neutralize politically charged terminology to avoid controversy, to conform to diplomatic conventions, or to make texts acceptable across different political contexts. This strategy is particularly relevant in institutional translation settings, where texts must function across diverse political and cultural environments.

Pym (2018) has examined neutralization in relation to culturally specific concepts. When source text references have no direct equivalents in the target culture, translators may opt for more generic terms that convey the basic meaning while shedding the cultural specificities. This strategy differs from explicitation in that it does not add explanatory material but rather substitutes a culturally marked term with a culturally unmarked one (Chimene-Wali, 2025; Adekanmbi, et al., 2026).

The relationship between explicitation and neutralization is complex and sometimes contradictory. As Gambier (2020) notes, both strategies involve transformations of the source text, but they move in opposite directions: explicitation adds specificity, while neutralization removes it. Understanding how translators navigate between these strategies in practice requires careful analysis of actual translation decisions in context.

Translation in African Multilingual Contexts

The study of translation in Africa has developed significantly in recent decades, moving beyond early concerns with missionary translation of scriptures to engage with the full complexity of translation practices across the continent. Bandia's (2008, 2014)

work has been particularly influential in establishing African translation studies as a distinct field. His research on translation in African postcolonial contexts has shown how translators navigate the legacies of colonialism, the diversity of indigenous languages, and the pressures of globalization. Bandia (2008) has argued that African translation practices often involve creative adaptation and hybridity, challenging Western centered models of translation equivalence.

Gyasi (2019) has examined the role of translation in the construction of identity in African literature, demonstrating how translated texts shape perceptions of African cultures both within and beyond the continent. Cronin (2017) has explored translation and globalization in African contexts, showing how digital technologies and global media flows are transforming translation practices.

In the specific context of West Africa, researchers have examined translation practices within ECOWAS and other regional bodies. Wali (2021) has documented the challenges of translating between English, French, and Portuguese, the three official languages of the community, and has explored how translation shapes the circulation of policies, laws, and political discourse across the region. However, systematic corpus based studies of translation strategies in this context remain rare.

Nigerian Political Discourse: Characteristics and Challenges

Nigerian political discourse is characterized by features that make it particularly challenging for translation. The country's linguistic diversity, with over five hundred languages spoken, means that political communication often involves complex code switching and mixing between English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. Oko (2020) provides a comprehensive analysis of the language of Nigerian politics from military rule to democracy, documenting the evolution of political rhetoric and its distinctive features.

The use of proverbs in Nigerian political discourse has been extensively documented. Ogunmodede (2022) examines Yoruba proverbs in Nigerian political rhetoric, analyzing their forms and functions across different contexts. Fagge (2021) similarly analyzes proverbs as rhetorical devices in Hausa political discourse. These studies demonstrate that proverbs serve multiple functions: they lend authority to arguments, they encode cultural wisdom, they create intimacy with audiences, and they allow speakers to address sensitive topics indirectly.

Nigerian Pidgin plays a particularly important role in political discourse aimed at mass audiences. Nama (2018) has examined the challenges of translating Nigerian Pidgin English in political discourse, noting that Pidgin's structures and idioms have no direct equivalents in standard French. Oyètádé (2019) situates these challenges within the broader context of language policy and political communication in Nigeria.

The institutional landscape of Nigerian politics also presents challenges. References to specific institutions and political practices may require explanation for audiences unfamiliar with the Nigerian context. Similarly, references to historical events, political scandals, or regional conflicts may carry meanings that are not transparent to outsiders. Oyètádé (2019) and Oko (2020) provide essential background for understanding these institutional and historical references.

METHODOLOGY

Corpus Design and Compilation

This study is based on a specialized corpus of ECOWAS French translations of Nigerian political discourse. Following the principles of corpus based translation studies outlined by Zanettin (2021) and Olohan (2021), the corpus was compiled from publicly available documents on the ECOWAS official website and from archives of ECOWAS proceedings held at the commission's headquarters in Abuja. The corpus covers the period from 2015 to 2023, encompassing two Nigerian presidential administrations and a range of political events including elections, security crises, and policy initiatives.

The corpus includes three categories of documents. The first category consists of official ECOWAS communiqués and press releases that report on or respond to political developments in Nigeria. These documents are typically produced first in English and then translated into French for distribution to francophone member states. The second category consists of speeches and statements by Nigerian political leaders delivered at ECOWAS summits and meetings, translated from English into French for the conference record. The third category consists of policy documents and reports submitted by Nigeria to ECOWAS bodies, translated for consideration by francophone officials.

The corpus contains approximately five hundred thousand words in the English source texts and a corresponding five hundred thousand words in the French target texts. The documents were digitized, aligned at the sentence level, and stored in a format suitable for computational analysis using corpus linguistics software, following procedures recommended by Baker (2018) and Zanettin (2021).

Analytical Framework

The analysis employs a mixed methods approach combining quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative close reading, as advocated by Kruger (2021) and Baumgarten and Özçetin (2019). The quantitative phase involved identifying potential instances of explicitation and neutralization through computational methods. For explicitation, the corpus was searched for patterns indicative of added explanatory material, including parenthetical clarifications, expanded nominal groups, and explicit

markers of logical relations. For neutralization, the corpus was searched for shifts from specific to generic terminology, particularly in domains where Nigerian political discourse is known to employ culturally marked terms.

The qualitative phase involved close reading of aligned source target pairs to verify and refine the quantitative findings. For each potential instance of explicitation or neutralization identified computationally, the researcher examined the full context to determine whether the observed difference indeed represented a translation strategy and to categorize the type of strategy employed.

The analysis focused on three domains of Nigerian political discourse that preliminary reading suggested were particularly rich in translation challenges: proverbial and idiomatic expressions, references to Nigerian institutions and political practices, and politically charged terminology relating to conflict and governance.

Coding and Categorization

Instances of explicitation were coded according to a typology adapted from previous corpus based translation studies, particularly the frameworks developed by Kruger (2021) and Pym (2018). The typology distinguishes between explicitation of cultural references, where the translator adds information to clarify a culturally specific term; explicitation of logical relations, where the translator makes explicit connections that are implicit in the source; and explicitation of participant reference, where the translator clarifies who or what is being referred to.

Instances of neutralization were coded according to a typology developed specifically for this study, drawing on the work of Wright (2020) and Schäffner (2018). The typology distinguishes between neutralization of culturally specific terms, where a culturally marked source term is rendered by a more generic target term; neutralization of politically charged terms, where loaded terminology is replaced with more neutral language; and neutralization of register, where informal or colloquial source language is rendered in more formal target language.

ANALYSIS

Explicitation Strategies in the Translation of Nigerian Political Discourse

The corpus analysis reveals systematic patterns of explicitation in the translation of Nigerian political discourse into ECOWAS French. Explicitation occurs most frequently in response to three types of source text features: culturally specific references that would be opaque to francophone West African audiences, implicit logical connections that the translator makes explicit, and participant references that require clarification. These patterns align with the explicitation hypothesis proposed by Blum Kulka (1986) and the typologies developed by Kruger (2021) and Pym (2018).

Culturally specific references trigger the most frequent and varied explicitation strategies. Nigerian political discourse is saturated with references to institutions, practices, and concepts that have no direct equivalents in francophone West Africa. As Oko (2020) and Oyètádé (2019) have documented, these references include traditional political institutions, indigenous concepts, and culturally specific practices. When such references appear in texts destined for translation, translators consistently add explanatory material to ensure comprehension.

Consider the translation of references to traditional political institutions. Nigerian political discourse frequently mentions traditional rulers, chiefs, and councils whose roles in governance, while not formally recognized in the constitution, carry significant political weight. In the corpus, the English phrase traditional rulers is consistently translated with added explication. In one document, traditional rulers becomes *les chefs traditionnels, gardiens des coutumes et autorités morales dans leurs communautés*. The translator adds the explanatory phrase *guardians of customs and moral authorities in their communities* to provide francophone readers with the context necessary to understand the role and significance of these figures. This exemplifies what Kruger (2021) categorizes as explicitation of cultural references.

References to Nigerian Pidgin expressions pose similar challenges. When Nigerian political figures employ Pidgin in their speeches, translators must decide how to render this distinctive register. Nama (2018) has documented the particular difficulties of translating Pidgin, noting that its structures and idioms have no direct equivalents in standard French. The corpus shows a consistent pattern of explicitation in such cases. In one speech, a Nigerian official used the Pidgin phrase *we dey together*, meaning *we are together* or *we stand together*. The French translation renders this as *nous sommes unis et solidaires*, adding the concept of solidarity to make explicit the implications of the Pidgin expression. In another instance, the Pidgin phrase *no gree*, meaning *refuse* or *resist*, is translated as *il faut refuser catégoriquement*, with the added adverb making explicit the emphatic quality of the original.

Explicitation of logical relations is also frequent in the corpus. Nigerian political discourse, particularly in spoken contexts, often relies on paratactic structures where logical connections are implied rather than stated. Translators consistently make these connections explicit in French, adding conjunctive phrases and logical connectors. In one speech, a Nigerian president stated *we have addressed the security challenges, development will follow*. The French translation renders this as *puisque nous avons relevé les défis sécuritaires, le développement pourra suivre*, adding *puisque* to make explicit the causal relationship implied in the original. This finding supports Toury's (2012) observation that translations tend to normalize source text structures to conform to target language conventions.

Explicitation of participant reference occurs when the source text uses pronouns or other referential expressions that could be ambiguous for readers lacking contextual knowledge. In one document discussing negotiations between the Nigerian government and militant groups in the Niger Delta, the source text repeatedly uses *they* without specifying which party is being referred to. The French translation consistently adds clarifications: *ils* (les groupes militants) and *elles* (les autorités nigérianes) specify the referents and prevent confusion. This strategy aligns with what Venuti (2019) describes as the translator's responsibility to ensure comprehensibility for the target audience.

Neutralization Strategies in the Translation of Nigerian Political Discourse

Neutralization strategies are equally prominent in the corpus, though they cluster in different domains than explicitation. While explicitation responds primarily to the need for comprehension, neutralization responds to the demands of diplomatic discourse and the need to manage politically sensitive content. As Schäffner (2018) and Wright (2020) have argued, neutralization serves crucial functions in political and institutional translation contexts.

Neutralization of culturally specific terms occurs when translators replace culturally marked source terms with more generic target terms. This strategy is particularly evident in the translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. Nigerian political discourse makes extensive use of proverbs drawn from various ethnic traditions, as documented by Ogunmodede (2022) and Fagge (2021). When these proverbs appear in documents intended for a diverse West African audience, translators rarely attempt to find equivalent proverbs in French or to translate them literally with explanation. Instead, they typically extract the core meaning and render it in neutral, non proverbial language.

In one speech, a Nigerian official employed the Yoruba proverb *bi a ba njeun ti a ko ri eni to njeun, a kii pe ko ma din ku*, which roughly means if we are eating and we do not see who is eating with us, we will soon run out of food. The proverb warns against selfish consumption and the failure to share resources. The French translation renders this as *la solidarité est essentielle pour la survie de notre communauté*, completely eliminating the proverbial form and presenting the message as a straightforward assertion. This exemplifies what Wright (2020) terms neutralization of culturally specific terms.

In another instance, an Igbo proverb about the dangers of pride was translated with similar neutralization. The source text stated the eagle does not eat the chick of its neighbor, a proverb cautioning against internal conflict and the betrayal of allies. The French translation became *il faut éviter les conflits internes*, again stripping away the proverbial imagery and presenting the lesson in generic terms. These examples

illustrate Pym's (2018) observation that neutralization often involves substituting culturally marked forms with culturally unmarked ones that convey the basic meaning while shedding cultural specificities.

Neutralization of politically charged terms is another prominent pattern in the corpus. Nigerian political discourse often employs strongly evaluative language to characterize political opponents, criticize government policies, or describe conflict situations. As Baker (2018) has shown, such language can be highly consequential in political contexts. When such language appears in documents destined for ECOWAS audiences, translators consistently neutralize the evaluative load, rendering potentially inflammatory terms in more measured, diplomatic language.

In one document discussing electoral violence, the source text referred to thugs employed by politicians to intimidate voters. The French translation rendered this as *éléments non identifiés*, a much more neutral formulation that avoids assigning blame or characterizing the actors. In another instance, the source text described a government policy as a disaster for the poor. The French translation softened this to *une politique qui pourrait avoir des conséquences négatives pour les populations vulnérables*, replacing the categorical condemnation with a hypothetical and qualified assessment. These examples illustrate what Schäffner (2018) describes as the diplomatic function of neutralization in political translation.

Neutralization of politically sensitive terminology is particularly evident in translations of documents dealing with Nigeria's internal conflicts. The source texts in the corpus use a range of terms to describe armed groups in the Niger Delta, in the northeast, and in other conflict zones, including militants, insurgents, terrorists, bandits, and criminals. The French translations show a marked tendency to neutralize these terms, often rendering them as *groupes armés* or *éléments armés*, terms that describe the phenomenon without making claims about motivation, legitimacy, or legal status. This pattern aligns with Munday's (2016) observation that institutional translators often prioritize neutrality and acceptability over source text fidelity in politically sensitive contexts.

Neutralization of register occurs when informal or colloquial source language is rendered in more formal target language. This pattern is evident in translations of speeches where Nigerian politicians employ the informal, accessible register of mass political communication. In one speech, a politician used the phrase *let me level with you*, an informal expression signaling frank and direct communication. The French translation became *je me dois d'être franc avec vous*, a more formal rendering that maintains the idea of frankness while shifting to a higher register. Katan (2018) has noted that such register shifts are common in institutional translation, where formal diplomatic discourse is the expected norm.

Patterns and Tendencies Across the Corpus

The quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals systematic patterns in the distribution of explicitation and neutralization strategies. Explicitation occurs most frequently in documents that are intended for broad distribution across ECOWAS member states, particularly in communiqués and press releases. These documents, which may be read by journalists, civil society actors, and the general public across the region, show the highest rates of added explanatory material. Documents intended for internal ECOWAS use, such as working papers and technical reports, show lower rates of explicitation, suggesting that translators assume a more knowledgeable audience. This variation supports Kruger's (2021) argument that explicitation is not automatic but is deployed strategically based on audience considerations.

Neutralization occurs most frequently in documents dealing with sensitive political topics, particularly those relating to conflicts, elections, and human rights. The pattern suggests that neutralization serves a diplomatic function, enabling ECOWAS to address sensitive issues while maintaining the neutral, consensus based language appropriate to a regional organization. As Wali (2021) has observed, this diplomatic function is central to ECOWAS translation practices. Neutralization is also more frequent in documents that will be published or publicly distributed, suggesting an awareness of how translated language might be received and interpreted by various audiences.

The relationship between explicitation and neutralization varies across text types and topics. In some cases, the strategies operate in tension, with explicitation adding specificity in one domain while neutralization removes it in another. A document might provide extensive explication of Nigerian institutional structures while simultaneously neutralizing language about political violence. This combination reflects the multiple functions of translation in the ECOWAS context: enabling comprehension while managing the political sensitivities inherent in regional cooperation. As Cronin (2017) and Gambier (2020) have argued, such strategic combinations are characteristic of translation in complex multilingual environments.

DISCUSSION

Implications for Translation Theory

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing refinement of the explicitation hypothesis. The corpus provides evidence that explicitation is indeed a systematic feature of translation in this context, supporting Blum Kulka's (1986) original formulation. However, the findings also reveal that explicitation is not uniform. It varies across text types, topics, and audience considerations in ways that the original

explicitation hypothesis did not anticipate. The findings support more recent, nuanced understandings of explicitation as a strategy that translators deploy selectively rather than as an inevitable feature of all translation, as argued by Kruger (2021) and Baumgarten and Özçetin (2019).

The study also contributes to the under theorized concept of neutralization. The patterns observed in the corpus suggest that neutralization deserves more systematic attention as a translation strategy, particularly in institutional and political translation contexts. As Wright (2020) and Schäffner (2018) have argued, neutralization is not merely the absence of explicitation or a failure to translate adequately. It is a positive strategy that serves specific functions, enabling texts to circulate across diverse political and cultural contexts without provoking controversy or misunderstanding.

The relationship between explicitation and neutralization revealed in this study has implications for understanding translation as a form of intercultural mediation. Translators in the ECOWAS context are not simply transferring meanings from one language to another. They are actively shaping texts to function effectively in a complex multilingual and multicultural environment. Their decisions about when to explicate and when to neutralize reflect sophisticated judgments about what audiences need to know and what language will be effective and appropriate. This understanding aligns with Venuti's (2019) conception of translation as an interpretive act that always involves transformation and with Pym's (2018) emphasis on the strategic dimensions of translator decision making.

Implications for Understanding ECOWAS as a Multilingual Space

The findings also illuminate the nature of ECOWAS as a multilingual political space. The patterns of explicitation and neutralization observed in the corpus reveal assumptions that translators make about their francophone West African audience. When translators add explanatory material about Nigerian institutions and practices, they assume that this audience lacks detailed knowledge of the Nigerian context. When they neutralize politically charged language, they assume that the audience includes parties with divergent perspectives and interests who must be addressed in language that all can accept.

These assumptions shape the kind of political discourse that circulates across the anglophone francophone divide within ECOWAS. The translations produced through these strategies create a particular version of Nigerian political reality for francophone consumption, one that is simultaneously more explicit in some respects and more neutral in others. This mediated version may facilitate regional cooperation by providing accessible information and avoiding provocative language, but it may also create gaps between Nigerian political discourse as it functions domestically and as it is understood regionally. As Bandia (2008, 2014) and Gyasi (2019) have argued, such

mediation is inevitable in multilingual African contexts, but its effects deserve careful attention.

The findings also speak to broader questions about language and power in regional integration. As Cronin (2017) has observed, translation is never neutral but always embedded in relations of power and hierarchies of languages. In the ECOWAS context, the translation of Nigerian political discourse into French reflects and reproduces particular power dynamics. The fact that Nigerian English source texts are translated into French for francophone audiences, rather than the reverse, reflects the demographic and economic weight of Nigeria within the region. Yet the translation strategies employed also reflect the diplomatic norms and institutional constraints of ECOWAS as a multilingual organization. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the role of translation in shaping regional political communication.

Implications for Translation Practice

For translators working in similar contexts, the findings offer insights into the strategies that experienced practitioners employ. The patterns documented in this corpus represent solutions that professional translators have developed to the recurring challenges of translating Nigerian political discourse for West African audiences. New translators can learn from these patterns while also recognizing that translation decisions must always be adapted to specific texts, contexts, and purposes.

The findings also highlight the importance of translator training that addresses the specific challenges of political and institutional translation in African multilingual contexts. As Bandia (2014) and Wali (2021) have argued, translators need not only linguistic competence but also deep understanding of the political and cultural contexts in which they work and the institutional settings for which they translate. They need the analytical skills to recognize when explicitation is necessary and when neutralization is appropriate. They need to understand the diplomatic functions that translation serves in regional organizations and the ethical dimensions of their work as mediators across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The findings also suggest the value of corpus based approaches to translator training. By examining patterns in large collections of translated texts, trainee translators can develop awareness of the strategies that experienced practitioners employ and can reflect critically on their own translation decisions. As Zanettin (2021) and Olohan (2021) have demonstrated, corpus based methods offer powerful tools for both research and pedagogy in translation studies.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined explicitation and neutralization strategies in ECOWAS French translations of Nigerian political discourse through a corpus based analysis of

documents from 2015 to 2023. The findings reveal systematic patterns in how translators render culturally specific references, politically charged terminology, and distinctive features of Nigerian political discourse for francophone West African audiences.

Explicitation strategies are deployed primarily to clarify opaque cultural references, to make implicit logical connections explicit, and to disambiguate participant references. These strategies respond to the need for comprehension across a linguistically and culturally diverse audience. Neutralization strategies are deployed primarily to manage politically sensitive content, to render culturally specific terms in generic language, and to shift informal registers to more formal ones. These strategies respond to the diplomatic functions of ECOWAS discourse and the need for language that can circulate without provoking controversy.

The study contributes to translation studies by providing empirical evidence of how explicitation and neutralization operate in an under researched context and by revealing the complex interplay between these strategies. It supports the explicitation hypothesis while also showing that explicitation is deployed selectively rather than automatically. It provides a detailed account of neutralization as a positive translation strategy with specific functions in political and institutional contexts.

The study contributes to African linguistics by illuminating the processes by which African political discourse is mediated across the colonial language divide. It shows how the distinctive features of Nigerian political discourse proverbs, Pidgin expressions, culturally specific references are transformed in translation for regional audiences. It reveals the assumptions that translators make about their audiences and the strategies they employ to make Nigerian political discourse accessible and acceptable across the region.

The study contributes to understanding ECOWAS as a multilingual space by revealing how translation shapes the circulation of political ideas and the construction of regional political discourse. It shows that translation is not a neutral conduit but an active process of mediation that shapes what francophone West Africans know about Nigerian politics and how they understand it. It suggests that the translated versions of Nigerian political discourse that circulate within ECOWAS are shaped by both comprehension needs and diplomatic considerations.

The limitations of this study suggest directions for future research. The corpus, while substantial, is limited to documents from a single eight year period and to the specific text types included. Future research could expand the temporal range, include additional text types, and compare translation practices across different ECOWAS institutions. Comparative studies examining translation between other language pairs within ECOWAS, such as French to English or Portuguese to French, would illuminate whether similar patterns obtain. Research incorporating interviews with translators

would provide insights into their decision making processes and the institutional constraints within which they work. Studies examining the reception of translated texts by francophone West African audiences would shed light on how these translations are actually understood and used.

Despite these limitations, this study demonstrates the value of corpus based approaches to studying translation in African multilingual contexts. As regional integration deepens and the volume of translated political discourse continues to grow, understanding how translation shapes political communication becomes increasingly important. The strategies of explicitation and neutralization documented in this study are likely to remain central to the work of mediating Nigerian political discourse for the diverse audiences of West Africa.

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