



WHAT'S YOUR LANGUAGE ?

Fancy a career as a translator?
Archana Correa gives you some tips

Do you have a flair for languages? Do you often find yourself bridging the language barrier? Are you looking for an interesting career that will literally open up the world to you? A job that pays well, lets you meet people, and work at your own pace? If you answered yes to these questions, consider a career in translation services.

It is an unusual career choice, and until a few years ago, not many would have considered it. Today, however, there are several experienced and quality Indian and foreign language translators in the country.

What you need

Ritu Bhanot, freelance translator, says, "Translation is rewarding, but tough work." Interested? Here are some skills and tools you will need to get going.

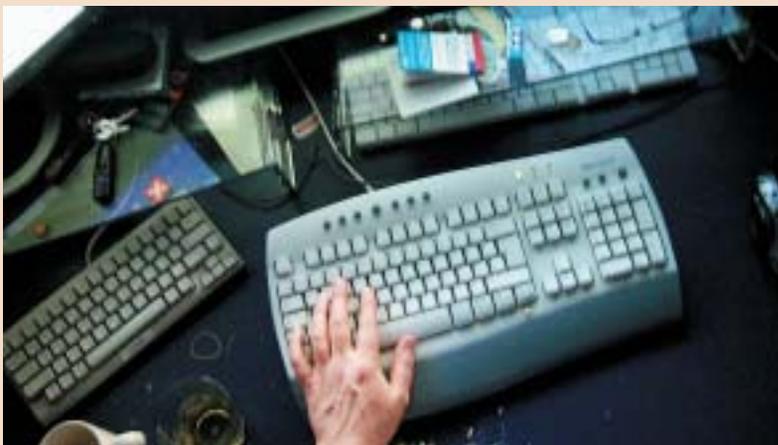
Language skills: To be a translator, you need to be fluent in at least two languages (source and target). This includes having a strong



vocabulary in both languages, as well as reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition, knowledge of local culture, traditions, and customs of the countries where the languages are spoken is an added advantage. This last is especially important to avoid inadvertent gaffes and faux pas during translation!

The multicultural nature of our country means that most people know at least two Indian languages, and quite well at that. Prof Sanjib Bhattacharya, Proprietor, EL Dorado Academy, Mumbai, a language and translation services company, explains that if you are interested in foreign language translation, you can take foreign

language courses at the language institutes run by the embassies or consulates of foreign countries. Language courses in French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Italian,



Ritu advises: "Remember, though, that simply studying a language is not enough. You need to go beyond a word-to-word translation and ensure that the essence of the original work is carried through into the translation."

Both, Prof Bhattacharya and Ritu, emphasise that clients generally prefer to work with translators who are native speakers of the target language

etc, are available in many cities across the country.

Skills: Ritu shares some inside information: "Organisation skills are very important because translators usually work on very tight deadlines and there are clients who may penalise you for delays. Translators are supposed to be always available (which is often not the case), so you should read your e-mails first thing in the morning and last thing at night and keep reading your e-mails, whenever and as often as you can. Client relations are very important. Politeness and respecting others have positive effects on your business."

Qualifications: Although formal qualifications in language or translation are not a must, they add to your credibility and make it easier to get assignments. In India, you can take full time or part time translation courses at the University of Pune, Visva Bharati in Shantiniketan, or Annamalai

University in Annamalainagar. The Centre for Translation Studies in Hyderabad offers advanced courses in translation.

Experience: Any experience in writing or journalism is a definite plus. After all, translation is another form of writing. There are several categories of translation, such as legal, scientific or technical, and literary. For legal and technical translation, it is necessary to have a background of the subject to be able to accurately translate technical terms and jargon.

Tools of the trade: As far as equipment is concerned, you will need a computer or laptop with an Internet connection. In addition, you will also need dictionaries in the languages you are working in. You should also regularly read books, magazines, etc, in those languages, to build familiarity with the culture and customs of those countries.

Getting work

As a translator, you can choose from several working options. You can work full time or part time, or as a freelancer or for one or more organisations or agencies.

The various sources of translation jobs include embassies, import-export firms, multinational companies, Web advertisements,

government agencies, and international airlines. Publishers who need books and documents translated into various languages are also a potential market.

Among government agencies in India, the Indian Scientific Documentation Centre at New Delhi provides jobs to both full-time and part-time translators for various languages.

In addition, the following websites post opportunities for translators.

Ø www.proz.com

Ø www.translatorscafe.com

Ø www.lyriclabs.com

Ø www.translationindia.com

Ø www.indiamart.com/eldoradoacademy/

Growth potential

Your success as a translator depends entirely on you. Qualities like efficiency, accuracy, and timely delivery will determine your success. So use your networking skills.

Quick start guide

Before you rush off to join that course or jump on to an assignment, here are a few rules to keep in mind:

- Start only when you are sure that you can deliver quality work.
- Beginners may find it easier to translate from foreign languages to English. Translating to foreign



A still from *Lost In Translation* starring Bill Murray



REMUNERATION

Like most flexi work options, there is no fixed rate. The rates vary depending upon the nature of the job and the experience of the translator. In addition, if you specialise in a particular field, you can demand a higher rate than someone without a specialisation in that field. The approximate rate per page of translation for various languages

is given below:

- Indian languages: Rs 150 to Rs 300
- French, German, and other common foreign languages: Rs 300 to Rs 500
- Japanese and Arabic: Up to Rs 750

Prof Bhattacharya explains that some agencies also pay per word, but the rates vary vastly.

languages is a challenge because it requires a deep knowledge of foreign culture, commonly used vocabulary, etc.

- Sign up with agencies or websites and regularly browse their postings.
- Promote yourself. Put up a blog with samples of your work and at least two sets of contact information including email addresses.
- Network on websites that are frequented by translators and clients, and share information and tips.
- Keep your eyes open for opportunities, however unusual.
- Practice, practice, practice! Remember, the first couple of years may be tough, but hang on, and you'll reap the rewards of your hard work. So get started and good luck!

With inputs from Ritu Bhanot, translator, www.ritubhanot.com; Prof Sanjib Bhattacharya, Proprietor, EL Dorado Academy, Mumbai. Ph: 2207.1227