

WORDYRAMA'S FINEST THE BLOGORAMA

VOLUME 1

**20 TRANSLATORS
AND
1 INTERPRETER**

*A collection
of stories*



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what? My story!

I have decided to start a series of posts on the steps translators took to climb the translator's ladder, in other words, what various translators did after graduation until they became freelance translators. I will act as the first episode of the series! Here we go!

After I graduated from University of Warwick with my MA in Translation Studies, my first thought was to find a job. I was living that time in Sheffield, UK and I was applying to any job that would strike my fancy. I did not really know what it was that I actually would like to do as a career, so having my languages as my weapons for battle, I was applying to any posts asking for languages. A friend of mine at the time (also a translator) was working for IBM in Manchester UK and whispered in my ear that the company was hiring staff! Great, I thought. I applied, I got hired, I worked for IBM for seven months. There, I got quite quickly involved in IT terminology, a field that would prove to be very important in my future career later on (at the time, I had not realized). Then, I saw in the paper that Exxonmobil was asking for staff. I applied, I got hired, I stayed with the company for 5 years. Exxonmobil was a fantastic company to work for and the fact that I could practice my English and German in an environment I loved was a work place heaven for me! After the end of the 5th year, a strange lust for creation started to grow. I wanted to make something of my own. I wanted my very own translation office! That was the point when I made one of the biggest decisions of my life: within two months I had packed everything I owned in carton boxes after living in England for 10 years and headed back to the sunny island of Crete.

And so, I established my translation freelance office and had a few clients in the local market. Not too long had gone by when a friend of a friend told me about another translator, our most beloved Catherine Christaki (aka @linguagrega), gave me a phone number and told me to call her! And so I did! We met when Catherine and Chris visited the island (Catherine was born in Crete but we lost her to this wonderful Athenian, Chris) and it was her that started applying the magic to me and putting the first seeds in my head to expand and offer my translation services to agencies abroad... The rest of the story you already know! And if you don't, do go through past posts in my blog!

Author's bio

Konstantina Drakou is a full-time freelance translator for English, German and Swedish into Greek. Since 2007, she has been translating in the fields of Localization/IT/Software/Hardware & Electronics/Telecommunications, Technical & Safety/Environment/Industrial, Medical/Pharmaceutical/Insurance. She tweets at @wordyrama. For more information, visit her website www.wordyrama.com.



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Catherine's Story

When I graduated from the Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge in 2001, next on my planned life path was a Master's degree in Translation. Due to family and financial reasons that wasn't viable right then, so I returned to Crete and found work in the hotel industry as a sales and marketing assistant for a chain of 3 5-star resorts in Elounda. I had also sent my CV to a few translation agencies and potential direct clients before I left the UK so translation work came right away in the form of 3 books of speeches from political conferences and I ended up doing two jobs; 8-9 hours in the office then another 8 in the hotel room, 6 days a week.

After 1.5 years, I had enough of living in a hotel room away from my family, so I returned to Heraklion and found work as a sales assistant in a travel agency. That job was much easier and less time-consuming, so it gave me the chance to do extensive research online, read and learn more about translation, sign up in translation portals (like Proz), send my CV to any potential translation client I could think of: Greek translation agencies, professional associations, hotels and travel agencies etc. To cover the individuals and the businesses I didn't contact directly, I put an ad in local newspapers.

That ensured a steady flow of translation work until I was ready to move to Athens where my next step was to work in-house in a translation agency in order to learn to use CAT tools. That came true but I only stayed there for 1.5 months. I was very active sending CVs and applying for freelance work even before I arrived in Athens, so my constantly growing freelance work allowed me to leave the agency and work full-time from home. Weirdly enough, I didn't cooperate with translation agencies in Greece. The very few that replied to me and sent tests, never sent any feedback or work. When some of them finally decided to contact me a few years later, I was already too busy with work from agencies abroad at much higher rates, so I never got the chance to work with Greek agencies.

About a year later, in the summer of 2005, I figured I finally had enough experience under my belt to start sending my CV to translation agencies abroad. I did that regularly (about 50 CVs each week) for the next year or so. I was fortunate enough to start getting work right away and haven't been without work since. For the next 4 years I didn't do much else than translate 12-14 hours daily. In the meantime, I got married, moved to a new house and since hubby is also a translator, we combined work and family time to full translation mode.

I didn't have a website, blog, social media presence, nada. New clients (agencies exclusively) found me because I had sent them my CV at some point in the previous years or on Proz. That changed in October 2009, during the ATA Annual Conference in Denver when I sent my first tweet. The following summer, we launched our website and blog



and discovered Facebook. Last year, we decided to stop being freelancers and work from home all day, so we created Lingua Greca Translations and now we spend our days in our tiny yet stylish office in Halandri, Athens. We don't have any direct clients yet and we still work pretty much like freelancers, but the significant changes in our lives in the past 3 years show that there are a lot of new and exciting things to come. Can't wait...

Author bio

Catherine Christaki has been a full-time freelance translator since 2001 and co-owner of Lingua Greca Translations since March 2012. She translates from English, French and German to Greek and specializes in IT, Medical and Gambling texts. She is happily active in social media (especially Twitter, @LinguaGreca) and co-writes a blog called *Adventures in Freelance Translation*.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Catherine's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what? Natali's Story

I never thought I would become a translator, although I grew up in a bilingual environment (my mother is a native French speaker). I knew from a young age that I would work with languages but translation was never part of the plan. By the age of 18, I already spoke 4 languages quite fluently but what really took my fancy back then was the dazzling world of the media, glossy magazines, TV, radio, cinema, etc.

Funnily enough, I studied translation instead. From the very first year of college, it was all about translation for me and still, I had no plans to work in the translation industry. I felt it would be too much to sit down in an office all day and translate 8 hours for someone else. I guess, what had not crossed my mind, back then in the late 90s, was that I could become a freelancer, instead.

When I finally graduated in 2003 with a MA in Translation Studies, I got a job in IT. I was a multilingual technical support officer for European clients, in the UK. That's when I started using my languages for the first time on a professional level. And I got to translate too. Technical terms mostly. Much as this sounded like fun for a while, it wasn't what I really wanted to do, so when the opportunity arose to join a TV production company in London, I screeeeeeeeamed with joy!

I researched travel content for Channel 4 TV programmes, and because they were travel programmes, I got to use my languages again. And I got to translate release forms, I got to liaise between our TV directors and the people we filmed abroad, I even translated marketing and real estate copy for our programmes.

In 2007, I decided I wanted a break from all that so I took the plunge and moved back to Greece. I briefly worked in television again, where I got into subtitling and translating foreign articles into Greek. I even did some interpreting live on national television once (what a scary experience!). In 2008, I was out of work and that's when I first started exploring the possibilities of a part-time freelance career as a translator. I did a lot of research on the internet and discovered websites like proz.com and Translators Cafe. I started getting my first projects but translation work was still scarce, so I found a full-time job as an editorial



assistant for a Greek N.G.O. Guess what? I did a lot of translations there too. I researched, translated and wrote content for e-learning programmes. I translated articles, researched content for environmental publications, translated our President's books for Greek publication, I co-wrote EU proposals and transcribed speeches from the conferences we attended.

My translation career had also started blossoming on the side. It seems I had been a translator throughout my entire working life without really admitting to it. In 2011, I created [Worlds of Words](#) and when the crisis finally hit me hard and I lost my job at the N.G.O. I decided to become a full-time freelance translator. At about the same time, I got into freelance writing for travel magazines too. Quickly, I discovered that working for myself was more rewarding than any of the jobs I had previously held. I was finally a location independent freelancer and I loved it. I am now a full-time freelance translator, specializing in marketing, media, business and tourism, and I can't think of anything else I would like to do more.

Author's bio

Natali Lekka is an English and French into Greek freelance translator and bilingual writer and the owner of Worlds of Words. She specialises in business, marketing, media and tourism texts. She is also the author of Worlds of Words – the blog and tweets at @worlds_of_words

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Natali's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Olga's Story

High school

My translating career actually started long before graduation! In fact, I was a high school student then. I studied in a special school where English was just as important as Russian or Maths, or any other core subjects. And during the last two years in high school we even had a subject called “technical translation”. Funny though, we mainly translated poems and songs there, so the classes weren’t really centered on technical translation. At the end of the 10th grade, we had a special translation practice. At that time some new (imported) equipment was granted to Vladimir children’s hospital, so the doctors asked our school to translate the user manuals. We worked on those translations and our teacher invited a pediatrician to help us with the medical terms that we came across. That was back in 1993, so we didn’t use Internet, only paper dictionaries and the knowledge of the pediatrician. Then our teacher edited the translations and handed them over to the hospital.

University

That was the first real translating experience in my life! I really liked it, but translation wasn’t my goal then. I wanted to be a teacher. So I went to the Vladimir Teachers’ training university and chose English as a major and German as a minor. At the same time, I started working part-time in the Wesleyan Church as an interpreter. First I interpreted in day camps, then started interpreting and translating in the Bible College. I loved that.

Bible College

During the last year in the university, my teachers suggested that I should continue education and study for a Master’s degree, but to me that sounded too far away from real life. I wanted to help people, to do something practical to make their life easier, and studying stylistics (that would be my field of studies) didn’t sound like something that could help them much. Besides, that was the year when my father died and I had to support my mother and me. So I refused to go to grad school, enrolled in the Wesleyan Bible College and continued interpreting and translating there. I was a second-year student when I organized an English language club for children and adults. There were several groups of students with the youngest of them being 7 and the oldest being 60 years old. The classes weren’t completely free, but I charged a very small amount of money which was enough for buying some small things for the club, plus we got some financial support from the Church. All teachers were volunteers. The goal of the club was to help underprivileged people gain some additional skills to help them in their future career and



personal development. The club successfully operated for 3 years until my daughter was born. Unfortunately, there was nobody else who could coordinate the work of the club at that time and I had to close it. I still see some of my students, we are good friends now. I think my best students were a group of 50-60 year old ladies. They wanted to conquer their language barrier, and they actually did it! I can't really say that they are fluent in English now, but they are not afraid to speak and make mistakes, and they understand quite a lot.

That was an exciting time. I was even able to serve as a director of a day-camp for children. It was done all in English and the goal also was to teach some English to the kids besides teaching the Bible to them. I still remember our team. We had a great time there, and so had the kids J

Staff translator

After graduating from the Bible College I stayed as a translator in the Church. I also taught Russian as a second language to the missionaries. That was an interesting experience. I was happy there but I started to sense that something had to be changed. I didn't quite understand what it was and how it was supposed to happen, but the birth of my daughter helped me to see things in a different perspective. I saw that people in the office spent way too much of their time for just chit-chat, and I realized that I was only working in one or two fields and I couldn't grow in my language skills there. So after Delia was born I talked to the pastor and was given a permission to work mainly from home. Soon I met a Russian lady who worked as a freelance translator. I loved the idea of widening my scope of topics, working from home and making extra money. Delia had some health issues then, so some extra money was more than needed! That lady was the one who told me about proz.com, shared links to some very good online dictionaries and even gave me my first translation assignments!

Freelancer

I started applying to all kinds of translation agencies but nobody liked my work. It was only then that I realized that I didn't know how to make real quality translations. I used to mainly work as an interpreter, plus I worked in a pretty narrow field. So I plunged into more studies. I subscribed to translation blogs, carefully studied the translation samples of other colleagues, bookmarked all possible resources, translated a lot of texts on different topics, started refreshing Russian grammar (I noticed that I was copying English syntax when translating into Russian. So I had to get rid of that mistake by all means!) The first year was very tough. But then I met the first agency that actually started giving me work. I am still cooperating with them, by the way. And then I gradually started getting more and more work. In 2008, I became a full-time freelancer and a registered individual entrepreneur.

In 2010, I discovered a completely new world of social media. I started a blog without a clear goal. I guess I just wanted other people to know that I exist. J I also opened an account on Twitter and registered a fan page on Facebook. That led me to subscribing to even more blogs and to more studies because I had no clue how to use social media. Finally, by the beginning of 2012 I reached the point when I realized that I actually have something to share with my colleagues! So I joined [Sharp End Training](#) team and I've been working on some useful training materials for translators there. The 26th of April is also going to be a very important day for me because I will hold my first [proz.com training session for Russian-speaking translators](#). I am going to speak about social media marketing. Hopefully, this session will be helpful to them J



What did I learn from my loooong journey? First of all, freelancing is hard work. In most cases, it's harder than working for somebody else. I always need to make sure my translations comply with the highest quality standards, because if they don't I won't have any work pretty soon! I also learned that I have to be my own marketing specialist and my own accountant. But I have experienced the happiness and the feeling of fulfilment that comes from knowing that people actually need my background, my knowledge and my skills! And my goal is still the same – I want to be useful to people. Hopefully, I am!

Author's bio

Olga Arakelyan is a professional freelance translator and a certified ESL teacher. She translates from English and German into Russian and specializes mainly in marketing, music, real estate, tourism, and education. She is also working on some exciting marketing and business training materials for translators at sharp-end-training.ru. You can find her on Twitter @Olenkaarakelyan, visit her English blog or, if you prefer reading in Russian, she'd be happy to see you in her Russian blog.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Olga's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Livia's Story

Like many women, my private life has had a big impact on my work life. But, also, I have to admit that my path to become a translator hasn't always been straightforward.

I graduated in Language Studies in 2001. At the time I was living in London and had a full-time job as a Team Leader in a call centre. After my graduation I decided that I wanted to become a Public Service interpreter and therefore I enrolled for a preparatory course for the DPSI examination. To do this I had to stop working, since I wouldn't have had the time to do everything. Unfortunately the course I wanted to attend (Health, English<> Italian) was cancelled, because there were not enough students, so I had to choose another subject. After giving it a lot of thought and asking around for the best advice, I decided to go for the legal option, but in a different language combination (English <> Spanish) since it seemed to be the field with the highest demand. I knew you should only translate/interpret into your mother tongue, but my Spanish at the time was excellent and I knew that there were jobs I just wouldn't accept (for example, I would have never interpreted in Court). I think that most of all it was a way to prove to myself that I could do it, but my idea was still to work mostly with Italian.

While following the course, I heard that there was a Community Health Interpreting course organised by a big hospital in London, so I decided to make things even more complicated for myself and attend it. But at least this time the course was in the right language combination, English<> Italian. This meant attending two courses a week, preparing the glossaries and doing my homework for both courses. It was tiring, but I am so glad I did that. It was also a great opportunity to meet people from all over the world and I still keep in touch with some of them. As I mentioned before, I had quit my job, so in order to earn some money I started doing some transcription work for a Marketing Research company. It was one of those jobs that I wouldn't accept now, because it wasn't very well-paid, but it was a start for me and I could earn some money while attending my courses. During the Community Health Interpreting course I had the chance to do some shadowing and see how a professional community interpreter works. I loved that and was adamant that was the job for me! As a matter of fact I have always liked medicine and find it a very interesting subject. Moreover I like the idea of helping someone in need. However, life is always full of surprises and things didn't go as I had expected.

I finished both courses and had already started doing some interpreting jobs for an agency and, then, the big day arrived. The day of the DPSI exam! As a matter of fact, I did pass the exam and with good marks (all merits and one pass). But there is one more reason why I'll never forget the day of the exam: that day I found out I was expecting my first child! Although I was extremely happy with the news, the fact that I was going to have a baby changed



everything, so my husband and I decided to move to the Netherlands (my husband is Dutch). That meant putting my interpreting dream on hold, because I didn't speak a word of Dutch when I moved here. When Luc was born, I found a job as an in-house Italian translator and proofreader for one of the leading manufacturers of connectivity products.

I loved my job and was very lucky to have great colleagues. It was more than just translating and proofreading, since we were also outsourcing translations to agencies for the languages we didn't do in-house. Here I had the chance to become very proficient with CAT tools, Wordfast at first and then Trados. At a later stage I even learned how to work with Trados TeamWorks. It would have been my ideal job, if only I didn't have to travel for approximately 5 hours a day! Luc was only 9 months old when I started which made it pretty tough. By the time I was at home, it was time for him to go to bed, so I couldn't really spend time with him. At the beginning I was only working 3 days a week, but it was still very tiring. So, after 2 years of commuting, I decided to look for a job closer to home and started working as a Project Manager. I was not translating anymore, but I had the chance to see the outsourcing process from a different perspective and see what clients expect. In 2007, after my second child was born, I decided to take the big step and become a freelancer. I think that having worked both as an in-house translator and as a PM has been very important for my background. I would actually recommend this kind of experience to anyone who wants to become a freelance translator. However, being a freelance translator is not exactly easy and I remember a great conversation I had on Skype with Marcela Jenney-Reyes (@MarcelaJenney on Twitter) a few years ago. She was extremely kind and gave me some great tips on how to improve my marketing skills. So it is also thanks to her that I am still here and happy with what I do. I mostly translate marketing material from English, Dutch and Spanish into Italian, but now that I can speak Dutch and my children are older, I would like to start interpreting again.

Author's bio

Livia D'Ettorre is a freelance translator and proofreader. She translates from English, Dutch and Spanish into Italian and specialises mainly in marketing, consumer electronics, software and website localization. She is a member of the NGTV (The Netherlands Society of Interpreters and Translators). You can find her on Twitter (@ldtranslations), Facebook (ldtranslations) and on her website, www.ldtranslations.com.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Livia's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Tess's Story

My name is Tess Whitty, an English into Swedish freelance translator. Many people have asked how I became a translator and when Konstantina asked me to write about how I climbed the translation career ladder after my graduation, I gladly accepted.

I am born and raised in a bilingual country, Finland, speaking the minority language, Swedish there. Early on I loved reading and writing and soon developed a keen interest in languages and different cultures. Apart from my mother tongue, I studied English, Finnish, German, French and Italian in school. But I never thought about becoming a translator, in fact I barely knew that such a career existed. I ventured on with studies in International Marketing, hoping I could make use of my language skills and love for different cultures through that.

I graduated with a M.Sc. in Economics and went on to study for a M.A. in Business Communications in France and Belgium. After this I got a job as a marketing assistant in Stockholm, Sweden and worked myself up the career ladder to become a product marketing manager in IT-services for an international telecommunications company.

I met my husband 20 years ago during my studies. We met in Finland, lived in Sweden, but he is American, so when a great job opportunity in Utah, USA was presented to him, we decided to move there. At the time of the move, I was pregnant with my second child and I decided to start looking for opportunities to work from home. A friend, who knew my love for languages and that I were practically bilingual, suggested that I should look into working as a freelance translator.

I started researching the translation career and after a while I registered in a few online translation directories. After my first job, I was hooked. I was lucky that we could live on my husband's salary and I could develop my business gradually as the children grew. After a year or so I decided to become a member of American Translators Association and invested in my first CAT-tool and that is when my career really took off. My background in marketing and IT created natural areas of specialization from the start.

That was now 10 years ago now. I have done a lot of research, taken educational classes in translation, freelancing and writing and gradually developed my translation career. There have been moments where I have had the opportunity to grow and become an agency, but so far I am quite happy being my own boss, and not be responsible



for someone else. Becoming a translator was not a conscious decision at first, but something I grew to love. I am constantly learning and developing, and can take advantage of my education in languages and marketing.

Author's bio

Tess Whitty is a full-time freelance English into Swedish translator since 2002, specializing in software localization, marketing and business communications. Her professional and educational background is in international marketing and business communications. Aside from her regular work, she serves as the language chair for the new English-Swedish certification program for ATA; president of the Utah Translators and Interpreters Association, and Chair of the ATA Chapters Committee. She also gives presentations on marketing and business skills for freelance translators and maintains the blog *The Business of Translation*. She is a member of the ATA and the Swedish Association of Professional Translators.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Tess's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Anna's Story

Being a student at the faculty of foreign languages, I used every opportunity to practice my English and French, so by the day of my graduation I've already had experience as translator of different technical texts and interpreter at the Festival of Street Theaters which is held in my town every summer. Unfortunately, all of these jobs were not well paid or, more than that, needed volunteers without being paid at all! As a student I could manage with that because work experience was more important for me and my CV, but in the beginning of my adult life and career the question of salary certainly predominated.

My first job wasn't an ultimate dream. The fact is, that translators or interpreters are not in demand due to low volumes of work. The most suitable position you can get is a double-job of a secretary / personal assistant and a translator. So I became assistant in audit and consulting company, but I didn't stop looking for a job I dreamt about. The company had Norwegian partners, and from time to time I translated different documentation, but I wasn't satisfied. The only advantage I got from this work experience was a possibility to learn much about audit process, including different professional terms which became very useful for me some time later.

I've worked in audit company for eight months; one day I was looking through job ads and saw an open position of translator/interpreter who is ready to work offshore on a pipelaying barge! Frankly speaking, I didn't think too much what that really meant, I only felt that this was definitely the job I was looking for. Thus, three years ago my dream came true and I started my translation career. During this period there was no a single day when I was bored or dissatisfied. Every day I have new challenges which make me more professional. And yes, four-five months a year I work offshore without seeing my family and friends and even without going onshore. For some people that can sound awful but you must admit that all jobs are different: somebody works in the office, somebody – at sea, why not! And this "offshore period" of my work is a real experience and adventure for me. From a huge pipelaying barge we lay gas pipeline on the sea bottom with the help of a large fleet which includes tugboats, pipe carriers and such specialized vessels as dredgers, trenchers, etc. The pipelaying process is implemented with the help of many people of different nations and occupations: marine crew, engineers, supervisors, technicians and, of course, translators and interpreters.

This work is my life, because I learn not only how to be a professional translator, but also how to remain a Person in different situations.



Author's bio

I work as a technical translator and interpreter in pipeline construction branch. Therefore, I spend half of a year offshore on a pipelaying barge. This job gives me huge opportunity to communicate with different nations, improve my language, communication and translation skills and describe all this in [my blog](#).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Anna's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what? Marta's Story

Well, to reflect my story, the title should be reversed, really. But let me take you back to Poland, about 7 years ago. At that time I was just about to start my degree in Polish language and culture – yes, Polish. I've been learning English since I was 6 or so, but Polish was my first love. At that point of time, I felt like discovering Romance writers or Middle Age poetry. Don't ask.

I also got my first translation clients pretty much by accident. There I was, my head full of hexameters and iambs, when a direct client asked me to work for them as a translator. And that's how it all started: I discovered that I could be using the foreign languages that I've learned before to actually earn money. Starting with working for direct clients in translation seems to me like getting into the industry through a back door. But also that's one of the reasons why I had to manage the business side of it so early. Direct clients taught me a lot of business skills that I put in practice further down in my career. For example, I learned how to negotiate, or how to convince clients to hire me and use my skills. This stage of my career, even though it seems very unstructured and random now, has prepared me for later developments.

However, I decided to leave my degree in Polish and move to the United Kingdom. Again, don't ask. I think I must have read too much romantic poetry! So I came to the UK with a base of translation clients, some business knowledge and plenty of enthusiasm. I took the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting exam and started working as an interpreter as well. I really enjoyed that stage of my career, allowing me to develop my people skills as well.

And then I actually started my BA degree in Applied Translation. I learned all the theories and read all the books. What I found extremely useful was the fact that I was still working as a part-time translator when doing my degree. I think I benefited from just about the right mix of theory and practice.

By the end of my degree, I started investing quite a lot of time and energy in Continuing Professional Development, not only in translation or interpreting, but also in marketing, new technologies and IT. Looking at this stage now, I suppose that attending countless events and spending hours and hours on learning really gave me the right mind-set and impetus to grow my own business. I gained skills and knowledge, but also confidence to market my services even more. And that's when I graduated.

I also became much more involved with our profession, blogging quite a lot and setting up the [Business School for Translators](#). I joined the management committee of the Interpreting Division at the Chartered Institute of Linguists, and a few months later I became the co-head of the UK Chapter of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters.



That brings us to January 2013, when I started delivering business training within the Business School for Translators with invaluable help from [eCPD Webinars](#). And of course, I still have to find some time to translate!

Author's bio

Marta Stelmaszak (Registered Public Service Interpreter, Member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, Associate of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting) is a Polish – English translator and interpreter working in law, IT, marketing, and business. She is a member of the Management Committee of the Interpreting Division at the Chartered Institute of Linguists and a Co-head of the UK Chapter of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters. She has been voted a Top 17 Twitterer and Top 20 Facebook Fan Page in Language Lovers 2012 contest. Marta is also a qualified business mentor and an affiliate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Marta's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what? Danielle's Story

Learning how Konstantina found her way and niche in the translation profession, made me realise how different our stories are.

Many moons ago, while still at school, I clearly recall doing some German translation homework, pouring over a dictionary, thinking to myself: "I could imagine doing this in my life..."

Both my mother and father, as well as my grandparents, ran their own businesses. So, you could say that having your own business runs in the family. I also recall having an awareness from a fairly young age how have a "business head". It was as if my mother were grooming me. For a long time, I have wanted to be my own boss, name my own fee and hours. I was after flexibility and mobility, portability: work from anywhere, anytime.

Straight out of university, I wanted to walk into a job at the Subtitling Department at the Special Broadcasting Service, otherwise known as SBS.

By the third year of university, I was laying the groundwork for my future profession. Work experience is unpaid work that someone, usually a student, might do for a set period of time in order to gain some knowledge about a particular profession that interests you. The thing was that SBS did not – nor do they now – offer a work experience program; however, I was fortunate enough to have a contact there and got to spend one day with Subtitling. I was in my element!

One day, browsing the University of Sydney's Careers Centre page, I came across a job for "Italian translation". An historian was compiling a book on the history of Italian in the Leichhardt area of Sydney. I translated articles from the Italian newspaper *La Fiamma*; this gig gave me my first experience in journalistic translation. Journalism has always held an interest for me anyway.

As mentioned above, I had my heart and mind set on that 'first job' at SBS Subtitling. Around the time of finishing my degree, there were not any jobs advertised; and their website clearly states they do not accept unsolicited resumés. It was time to change the game plan. While looking into getting other translation work, I tutored for an English Department linguistics course at the University of Sydney and did some Italian and English transcription work for a



company based in Sydney. I kept my hand my hand in both language and tutoring, which I also enjoy, while drumming up more translation work.

That is probably around the time I joined twitter. I started to read widely about the industry – from technology to marketing yourself – and to follow other translators. In my opinion, Twitter is **the** platform for networking in our profession!

Even though I was armed with an honours degree in Italian studies and completed part of my degree in Italy, many agencies I found were also looking for years of experience. A good lawyer friend then suggested volunteer work. The first place I emailed was Cancer Council New South Wales (NSW), in Sydney. I was pleasantly surprised with an immediate and positive response. They were looking for someone to translate part of their website and various questionnaires for a study they were conducting into the causes of cancer. It was exciting to have a golden opportunity placed right in my lap.

While gaining valuable experience doing the voluntary role, I managed to get signed up with some agencies, mainly in Italy and Switzerland – my main target markets. I am currently considering a sabbatical in Italy – to re-immense myself in my source language and culture, attend conferences in Europe and meet other translators and clients in person. I came across some invaluable information about sabbaticals at: <http://speakingoftranslation.com/listen/> with Corinne McKay (@corinnemckay) and Eve Bodeux (@ebodeux).

When it comes to working for yourself, perseverance and not taking “no” for an answer are imperative qualities. I say: “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” I have learnt to be flexible and keep an open mind – prepare to check in with yourself and make career adjustments accordingly.

I am about to impart my knowledge and experiences to a newbie Danish translator who has just arrived in Sydney. I wonder which translator archetype I will fit into? Refer @VitekSteve , the Patenttranslator’s Blog to find out!

Author’s bio

Danielle Gehrmann has been an Italian to English translator since 2005. She specialises in journalism; healthcare; academic – mainly in the field of linguistics; pharmaceutical; and automotive and mechanical texts. She has a special interest in the translation process per se and tweets about marketing and running a business, technology and various language-related topics at @danielletrans

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Danielle’s Story



**So, interpreter! How did you
manage that?**

Donald's Story

My first encounter with grammar was at the hands of Miss Mcleod at Pediston primary school in the Scottish Highlands, where I learned about nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on. I didn't see much point in it then little knowing how much it would help me in learning a foreign language.

I was first taught French from the age of eleven at Hawick High School in 1952 but gave it up in the second year. I lived out in the country in Scotland and the only people I knew who had been to France were ex-servicemen. I was sure, that I would never travel to France.

I left school with a good basic education but no qualifications; worked, served in the Army, was demobbed and achieved City and Guilds Advanced Certificate in welding.

During my time with the Army, I was stationed with the UN on Cyprus and learned a little Turkish, as I was stationed in Turkish villages. If I had been stationed in Greek villages, I would probably have learned Greek.

I briefly visited Germany on two occasions and these two visits aroused the interest in me and I started to learn German at evening class, after the welding course. I was 28 years old, at this time so rather a late starter.

After two years, I started work as a welder in Germany. I took a, "Teach Yourself German" book with me and by studying in the evenings and practicing during the day, honed my skills. Almost invariably, I was the only German speaker in a group of British workers and so did a great deal of interpreting. If anyone needed first aid or had to go to a hospital, I usually went with them. I resolved workplace disputes to the best of my ability.

After some years, I returned to UK and started work as a welder with a company which produced lorries and busses, informing personnel that I spoke German.

A few years later, I achieved the Institute of Linguists Final Diploma. Some years after that, a group of German distributors came to visit and I spent half a day acting as interpreter. During this time, I also taught at evening class whilst looking for a full time teaching job.



After the foreign part of the company went bankrupt, our firm was sold in pieces and I worked for one of the new companies formed doing the same job as before (welding) as well as translating the odd letter or piece of technical work.

After many years with that company, I left to work as a bi lingual accounts manager in a nearby town and worked there for almost ten years. My fellow workers there were great but the job was not really to my liking.

Towards the end of my time there, I enrolled on a public service interpreting course run by Interp-Right, a training agency, at Salford University.

At about this time, telephone interpreting work started to come in. I was working late shift so used to log in for interpreting three hours each forenoon.

I then decided to take the plunge and go self employed.

As I was paying monthly for my course on a credit card and needed train fares, books and so on, more money was going out as coming in but, eventually, I got on even keel. I completed the course, not missing a single day but did not sit the exam. I did not take the exam as I simply could no afford it at that time but I learned a great deal on that course.

I have been self employed for well over two years now, doing almost only telephone interpreting and getting along nicely, although I am not making a fortune.

Many people have helped me along the way and I am grateful to them all.

Perhaps I should have stuck with French at secondary school and then chosen interpreting as a career but it is always easy to be wise after the event.

Author's bio

Donald is a German/English free-lance interpreter, is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists. He can be found on Facebook under German interpreters and translators as well as on Linkedin. He has spent many years working as a welder both in Germany and UK.

**So, interpreter! How did you
manage that?
Donald's Story**



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Katya's Story

Well what do I start with. Perhaps with the statement that I became a translator quite unexpectedly for myself and those around me. And here's how.

I've always been fond of English but I never dreamt of becoming a translator. Instead, I dreamt of becoming a doctor. During my last year in school though I suddenly changed my mind for a number of reasons, and since it was a so-called "English school" (we had more English than most of other schools here in Samara, Russia) I automatically decided to go for foreign languages. Which I did. I graduated from the foreign languages department of the Samara State Pedagogical University in 2001, but at that time I had no plans to become a translator either. In my naïve view there was no future for a translator in Samara. I worked as an administrations manager at an advertizing company for a while and then as a sales manager at an international hotel that opened here. That was a great experience. I learned a lot and in addition to new business skills I acquired something that would later become part of my specialization as a translator: a profound knowledge of the hospitality industry. I had lots of fun. However, deep inside I guess I never had this feeling of coming home, of having found something I wanted.

And then I gave birth to my daughter. The first 6 months of my maternity leave my only job was being a mom, and then I thought: why should I just sit at home and do nothing? Maybe I can translate during this time. Yes I have always been an active person who has no trouble finding something to do. Well, I began looking for translation assignments. The first ones were quite funny now that I think of it. I had practically no knowledge of the profession and had to find answers to millions of questions. But most importantly, I just loved the process! A couple of months later I had no doubts that was something I wanted to do for a living. And then it was like a snowball getting bigger and bigger as you roll it in wet snow. Going freelance, finding the ProZ site (quite accidentally, while researching some term meant for translation), attending my first powwow in Moscow (that sure took some courage!), connecting with knowledgeable colleagues, attending a seminar in Kharkiv and many other exciting things that gradually showed to me what this profession is all about. And lots of work in the meantime, finding my specialty areas (creative translations), working on my qualifications, mastering tools and trying to improve with each translated text.

I've been a freelance translator for something like 7 years now and I am still so happy that it all worked out this way and not the other. I'm not saying it's an easy road, by no means. But I've found something I really love doing and can do quite well, I have the freedom that allows me to see more of my kids than most working moms, and as a bonus I've found so many wonderful people which I would probably never have met if I didn't become a translator (who'd



have thought such a “lonely” occupation would give me so many friends). Definitely intending to stay in this business for the years to come, and my numerous translation-related plans will hopefully make these years fun too.

Author's bio

Katya Filatova is a native Russian freelance translator from English as well as German and French, specializing primarily in hospitality, marketing, sports (figure skating), music and transcreation. She also translates literary prose. Katya is a regular speaker at Russian national translation conferences (Translation Forum Russia).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Katya's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Oliver's Story

At school, I enjoyed and was good at the 2 languages that I had the chance to study: French and Latin. But the same could be said for most of my other subjects. Not being sure what I wanted to do in life, I took the route of reducing my options by the least amount, which led to a mathematics degree and a computer-science diploma at Cambridge University. In 1993, I embarked on a career in a software company in the same city.

As my role expanded from programming to include quality control, technical writing, and editing other people's documents, my English language skills came to the fore, and I became the go-to guy for that kind of work. Not really fulfilled in the IT industry, after some soul-searching, I identified some strong basic skills that I could use in a potential career change: research, analysis and writing.

Nothing at this point had led me to translation, but something decisive was about to happen. In the early noughties, as the budget airlines arrived on the scene, I acquired a taste for jetting around Europe, from Estonia and Norway to the Basque country and Italy. I enjoyed learning a little of the language before I went, to exchange a few words with shopkeepers, waiters, that sort of thing. You should have seen the look on the receptionist's face in San Sebastián when I asked for a hotel room in Basque. I found Italian a particularly delightful language, so I kept at it. A teach-yourself book led to an evening class, an A-level, a proficiency certificate from Siena University for foreigners, and 2 years of part-time day-release studies in Italian language and translation at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge.

There, I met my future wife, Valentina (yes, she's Italian!). Having exhausted all other options for continuing my Italian studies, I discovered the City University (London) 1-year distance-learning preparatory course for the Chartered Institute of Linguists' diploma in translation. I found it excellent; apparently, I also had the skills to produce good translations. It took me several months to get up to speed – literally, to be able to translate fast enough – and at the end of the course, I thought, well, I might as well take the exam, which I did in January 2008. Not long after, the results came through: 1 Merit and 2 Distinctions in the 3 papers. Wahey!



We were arranging our wedding and planning to move to Italy, but I still didn't have a job. Perhaps I can do some translation work, I thought. Not really knowing where to start, I sent out a few CVs and registered in the phone directory, which brought me a couple of free pens from people trying to sell me bookkeeping services, but no enquiries. I then heard about a seminar at Westminster University for new freelance translators, organised by the ITI, so I went, and one of the speakers mentioned ProZ. I duly registered, created a profile, and began to answer KudoZ questions and bid for jobs. Some of them I landed. I was still working at my old IT company in Cambridge at this point, so doing the translations at lunchtimes, evenings and weekends while organising a wedding and a house-move to Italy was something of a strain.

But it paid off, as I quickly gained a full portfolio of regular clients and real translation experience. The rates weren't sky-high at the beginning, but as I've invested in my skills, I've been able to increase my prices and attract better clients and more rewarding work. Five years on, I'm satisfied with progress, but hungry for more. Onward and upward!

Author's bio

Oliver Lawrence is a freelance Italian to English translator specialising in marketing, tourism and contracts, with an interest in Plain English, translation quality, productivity and CPD. He tweets as @oliverlawrence1.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Oliver's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Luciana's Story

Born before the Internet boom, I had always imagined myself translating at a desk with a typewriter and lots of dictionaries and books... Looking back now I can say that my dreams have come true, but in a quite different way.

I've got my translation degree in 2002, at the end of the worst Argentine crisis I can remember. Given the difficult economic situation in my country and as I didn't know that I could work remotely, I got a job at a store and, with my first salary, I bought my computer. Although this job took most of my time, I never abandoned the idea of working as a translator. I managed to attend translation congresses and establish relationships with colleagues and former class companions. Also I did some translations for local clients and became a member of the [Board of Professional Translators of Santa Fe](#). One day, I met a colleague who was happily working as a freelance translator, and she encouraged me to start contacting translation agencies. Fortunately, it didn't took me long to get my first translations. For some time, I continued working at the store until I decided that I was ready to become a full-time freelancer, a decision that changed my life forever.

At the beginning, I was utterly happy because I was working on many translation projects. However, my happiness didn't last long. I started to feel tired because I worked from Monday to Monday, 13-16 hours a day. My life was about translations, crazy deadlines, computers and CAT tools. Since this wasn't the life I wanted for me, I had to learn how to manage my time and to delegate tasks. I was already working with Fernando D. Walker, my partner, so we shared some ideas to overcome this situation.

In 2007, we set up Iwóka translation Studio, a small translation studio that offers translation services from English into Spanish mainly to the Renewable Energy, Sustainability and Naturopathic Medicine sectors. Needless to say, this was a turning point in our careers because not only did it allow us to get bigger translation projects but also it gave us the opportunity to combine our passion for translation with our love for Nature.

Another event that I will never forget in my career life was a meeting we attended in Buenos Aires. There we met other translators and interpreters, who shared with us their vision about the profession and the international translation market. And in 2009, [Aurora Humarán](#) invited us, among



other colleagues, to found the [International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters \(IAPTI\)](#), an organization that promotes ethical practices in the field of Linguistic Translation and Interpretation. Currently I am a Member of that organization's [Membership Liaison Committee](#) and Logistics Committee, and volunteer as the editor of the organization newsletter, [The IAPTimes](#).

Lastly, I want to thank Konstantina for having invited me to share my story with you. I really hope you enjoy it!

Author's bio

Luciana E. Lovatto uses her passion for communication, her will and her commitment to her work to lend support to people who do business in harmony with nature, helping them get their green ideas across in an effective and culturally sensitive way to Spanish-speaking communities everywhere. She tweets at [@LucianaLovatto](#) and co-writes a translation [blog](#).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Luciana's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Herman's Story

It was 1991 when I had to decide what languages I would study to become a fully-fledged translator. The school I was to attend only had four languages to offer: English, French, German, and Spanish. Every student was to pick two. Only later, when I had already graduated, other languages were added, such as Russian, Italian, and Japanese.

Anyway, English was an obvious choice. I also chose Spanish because it was the language used by many local South American shortwave stations that I could pick up on my shortwave receiver at night and I wanted to understand what they said. I remember getting many frowns, even from South American teachers in our school who had no clue of what I was talking about.

Before I graduated, I had already started sending out letters of applications to companies. To my big surprise I got a one-year contract in the newsroom of a national commercial television station. A very big plus for my CV!

Then I worked for 15 years as a project manager in several Belgian translation agencies. I learnt an awful lot, especially on how translation companies regard freelance translators, next to working with lots and lots of different software programs.

I noticed that apart from the last translation agency I worked in, the agencies had no real vision. They either only had eyes for profit or their own personal income. Investment was a very dirty word, never to be used, much less expected.

This all changed in the last agency I worked at. There, the general manager has a vision while the company produces its own excellent software, attends international conferences, etc.

And yet, after fifteen years of project management, I decided the time had come to finally do what I had always wanted to do in life: to translate full-time.

So a little over 2 years ago I settled as a freelance translator. So far it has been a wonderful experience. The benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages.



I especially translate technical manuals and marketing brochures, but I do other texts too of course.

Earlier this year, I joined a newly founded local group of translators, [Gent Vertaalt](#) (Ghent translates). It is a wonderful group of people I much enjoy being with. It never ceases to amaze me how people with so many different backgrounds so easily can understand each other, simply by having the same profession. I also joined the very interesting [International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters](#) (AIPTI).

I do other things besides my business as a translator. In the past 4 years I have published three non-fictional books, the most recent one selling wonderfully.

I am also a Board member of the Belgian sceptic society, Secretary to a British DX Club, and I enjoy playing badminton.

Author's bio:

Herman Boel is an English/French/Spanish into Dutch translator. Herman has a Master's Degree in translation and mainly translates technical and marketing texts. You can [contact him](#) and you can follow him on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Herman's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Louise's Story

I started my Language studies with no knowledge whatsoever about translation. I used to think that linguists would translate texts from their mother tongue into their second language, and I did not realise that translation was needed everywhere, beyond novels and films.

My MA dissertation led me to conduct some research on the challenges of translating audio-visual material, creating subtitles, and localising humour and culture. The whole process was fascinating and I sure did learn a lot, yet I was pretty much a stranger to the industry and I had no translation experience when I entered my postgraduate degree in Technical Translation & Writing at the University of Western Brittany (Brest).

During the course, I got my first translation jobs with charities or local clubs and associations. Getting experience while helping organisations was exciting and rewarding. It also allowed me to test the waters in a variety of fields to see which texts I enjoyed working on the most and what subjects I was best at.

My fellow students and I also got to meet several established translators who would tell us about their businesses. It was great to see that so many career choices were open to linguists: working in-house, freelancing with agencies, applying to tenders for big clients.

I, for one, was not very confident and could not imagine myself taking the freelancing plunge – although I had really enjoyed the unpaid freelance jobs that I did for my studies, especially the relationships established by e-mail with the “clients”.

However, I had to set up a business while still at university as an agency approached me for proof-reading work. At the end of my course, I chose to keep my business for a while because another company had contacted me for translation work. I thought freelance projects might be a good idea as a complementary source of income to the job I would get.

Several months later, the agency where I had trained for my work placement sent me a 12,000 word text to translate. I was very grateful that I had not closed my business after all! This first large project completely changed my vision of freelancing, because I worked in “real” conditions: there was no relaxed deadline any more, I was alone at home to work and had to do a certain number of words per day in order to stay on schedule. This experience



could have been quite chaotic: my laptop died the day I was assigned the project and I had to get acquainted with my new computer and its OS quite quickly, plus I was living on a very remote peninsula at the time and could only access the Internet through a 3G dongle!

Despite these minor obstacles, the translation was a delight to work on and I really enjoyed the freedom that came with freelancing. Once I passed my degree with honours, I did not look for an in-house position and started prospecting translation agencies for freelance work.

The first few months after graduation were quite difficult as I was mainly working on unpaid tests, but my patience soon paid off and I lived my first feast period three months later.

Today, two years after finishing university, I could not be happier that I dared to try and walk the freelancing path. I've had a few dry spells but my work stream has been quite regular overall, thanks to the great agencies I work for on a regular basis.

Author's bio

Louise Péron has been an English to French translator since February 2011. She works on marketing, touristic and technical texts. Based in Brest in Brittany, France, Louise strives to make the English-speaking world accessible to French audiences by combining her language skills and her lifelong passion for foreign cultures. You can find her on Twitter as [@LSPTranslation](https://twitter.com/LSPTranslation).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Louise's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Aleksandra's Story

Before I enrolled at the University, I had never imagined myself working as a translator. I was always interested in Natural Sciences so I graduated from a mathematical gymnasium in order to study math, medicine, or maybe even one of those in the faculty of science. However, few months before my graduation, I decided I need a change and enrolled in the Faculty of Philology to study Applied Linguistics in the Serbian language. I also took courses in Croatian and Literature, together with very serious 2 years high-level English course. It was then I discovered I enjoy working with languages. I have to admit I was a real nerd who never flunked an exam and was gladly accepting additional papers for extra credit. At the same time, my father (who was an industrial engineer) became interested in hovercrafts. He didn't know English and there wasn't any literature about hovercrafts in Serbian, so he asked me if I could translate various articles and manuals that he photocopied from magazines written in English. I borrowed large English dictionary of engineering terms from a public library and started translating. My father was closely watching my work and was giving me additional explanations on how things work. At the same time, he was introducing technical terms in Serbian that were completely new to me. I created table in Excel with original English terms, their Serbian equivalents and detailed explanation with examples. After I started using CAT tools, I realized that that was my first manually created TM. The similar thing inspired me to start translating medical texts. My sister was studying medicine at that same time and was on her way to become MD. She was learning aloud and I was mingling around asking her about terms and diagnosis. She had great handbooks for several medical fields that were written in both Serbian and English. I used that book as a translation workbook – I would translate page from English to Serbian and then compare it to the translation from the book.

After my BA studies, I decided to bring my translation knowledge to a higher level and enrolled in Applied Linguistics Master's program with specialization in translation theory. At the time, Serbian economy was so bad; there were hardly any jobs for highly educated people. I was lucky enough to get a full-time job as a librarian at National library in Kragujevac. Suddenly, I was granted unlimited access to wonderful world of books and that inspired me to try translating literature. Therefore, I started volunteering as a translator for literature magazines, translating only poems and short stories. At the same time, I continued practicing medical and technical translation. After a while,



one of my father's friend offer to pay me a small amount for a translation of manual for laser cutting machine. That was my first real assignment for a client who was willing to pay not-so-low rate I proposed. I started doing it regularly and, at the same time, started translated medical texts for my sister's colleagues who didn't know English. I was so happy at that point. I passed all MA exams with high grades and defended my MA thesis while working and gaining valuable experience in technical and medical translation. It looked like word-of-mouth marketing I had was very useful because it attracted new direct clients.

Shortly after I met my future husband, I got interested in IT translation. He has MSc in Computer Science and is so passionate about software development that he transferred most of his interest on me. I even enrolled in several online programming courses that I finished successfully. In addition, I was learning about hardware and software architecture from the man of my dreams. He is very patient yet demanding teacher who likes to go the extra mile and requires the same from the student. I had a hard proof that I was getting better and better and felt proud about that. In the meantime, I left the job at National library and started teaching Serbian language at International Baccalaureate DP School in Belgrade. Translation clients list was getting longer and I even started working for several translation agencies. I also started working on my PhD Thesis in Forensic linguistics and ended up translating, teaching and writing from dusk until dawn, sometimes even on weekends. It was time to stop and reorganize, so I decided to take a leap of faith and become full-time freelance translator. I quit teaching job and started translating full time. Suddenly, I was able to finish all daily tasks and still have time for family and social life. It's been a year since I switched to freelancing and I don't regret my choice. I still have a long run ahead of me to fulfill my goals, but I hope that's going to be exciting and rewarding journey.

Author's bio

Aleksandra Milcic Radovanovic is English to Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian freelance translator specialized in technical and medical translation. She has a BA in South Slavic languages and literature, MA in translation and is currently working on her PhD thesis in Forensic Linguistics. She is also interested in computational linguistics and natural language processing. You can find her at her blog (<http://linguistblog.com/>) and on Twitter as [@AleksM](#)

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Aleksandra's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Fernando's Story

It goes without saying that all translators have a love for languages, for words, for writing, so I am no exception. I started learning English at secondary school and, from that very moment, I felt that I would always have a close-knit relationship with languages. I knew that my mission in life was to be a mediator of cultures, a task that has undoubtedly given me great satisfaction and fulfilment.

Many years have passed since those secondary school days, but I still remember how overjoyed I was to begin my translation studies. Of course, it was a difficult time, with many ups and downs, but in 2001 I finally reached that long-cherished goal. I was very proud of being a translator, but after that priceless moment vanished, I came down to earth and the first question that crossed my mind was: "And now what?" As many of my colleagues, I didn't know where to find translation work, since I hadn't received the right training to deal with this situation. After some time, I was gripped by a growing sense of frustration because I couldn't establish myself as a translator. Fortunately, I was able to find a job at a store in Santa Fe (Argentina) that gave me the possibility to buy my first computer and to stay connected with the virtual world. During that time, I became a member of the [Board of Professional Translators of Santa Fe](#) and attended translation events in Rosario and Santa Fe. In 2004, I went to the [International Translation Conference](#) celebrated after the [Third International Congress of the Spanish Language](#), where I met a colleague who told me that she was working as a freelance translator for national and international translation agencies. Just imagine my face! It was the first time in my life that I heard the words "translation agency." Finally I could see a speck of light at the end of the tunnel. After sending lots and lots of CVs and cover letters to translation agencies, the first translation projects started pouring in. At the beginning I was truly happy because I was translating all the time, but then I started feeling a bit tired since I worked non-stop almost 12 hours a day, including the weekends. I couldn't help feeling bad although I was doing what I had always wanted.

One day I received an email from a very prestigious colleague I had sent my CV to, who drew my attention to all the mistakes I had been making because of my lack of experience and information about fundamental aspects of translation work, such as rates and working conditions. That message was like finding water in the desert. As I was working with [Luciana E. Lovatto](#) at that time, I talked to her and we started thinking how we could improve our



situation. After planning carefully our next step, in 2007 we set up [Iwóka Translation Studio](#), a small translation company that provides linguistic services from English into Spanish to eco-friendly individuals, groups, organizations and businesses who want to communicate with Spanish-speaking communities effectively and in a culturally sensitive way, so that they can increase their competitive edge in a globalized market while spreading their green ideas and contributing to saving planet Earth.

Another significant milestone in my professional career occurred in 2009, when [Aurora Humarán](#) invited me to be one of the founders of the [International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters \(IAPTI\)](#). I will always be grateful to her for having included me in this project because it has given me the opportunity to be in contact with professional translators and to share ideas with them about how to defend and protect our profession. Nowadays, I am part of the Board of Directors of this association.

I would like to thank Konstantina for having invited me to share my story with all of you. I really hope you find it interesting! And remember: don't stop chasing your dreams, discover what you're passionate about and, most important of all, enjoy life!

Author's bio

Fernando D. Walker is an English-into-Spanish language mediator who specializes in the fields of Renewable Energy and Sustainability. He makes use of his pro-active attitude, motivation and passion to help individuals, groups, organizations and businesses involved in these sectors deliver their messages clearly and consistently throughout the Spanish-speaking countries. You can follow him on [Twitter](#), [Google+](#) and [LinkedIn](#). He also co-writes a translation [blog](#).

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Fernando's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Heidi's Story

When I started a BA course at the University of East Anglia I didn't know I'd end up as a freelance translator. I hadn't really thought what I could do with the skills I was about to gain. All I knew was I wanted to study Swedish and Greek. In 2001 I graduated with my BA in Scandinavian Studies with Swedish Honours (and Greek Subsidiary language), and by then I had figured out that I wanted to be a translator. I went to the University of Helsinki with an aim to get my MA (Swedish Translation Studies and Greek) done as quickly as possible. However, things didn't quite turn out the way I planned. Within a couple of months it was clear that it definitely wouldn't be quick. They didn't want to compensate the courses I'd done before, and therefore their estimate for my graduation was 5 years! By Christmas I had quit the university and found out about MA courses in England. Next September I started an MA course in Advanced Scandinavian Translation Studies at the University College London, and it took a year to graduate. Soon after that I found my first translation clients and started freelancing. A few months later I landed a job in a translation agency in central London. I worked there as a translator network coordinator for almost 2 years. That did teach me a lot about the translation business and it was great to see how things work in a big international agency with hundreds and hundreds of contacts around the world.

In 2006 I moved back to Finland and started working as a project manager in a translation agency in Helsinki. It took a bit over a year before I said goodbye to them and started my career as a full time freelance translator. By then I had already several years of translation experience and some established clients. For the first couple of years of my full time freelance career my main passion was in subtitling. I really enjoyed it as there were such a vast variety of TV programs and movies from documentaries about nuclear research to The Simpsons. Unfortunately it soon came clear that it was very time consuming and poorly paid. I had to reconsider my options and decided to focus fully on normal document translations as it would give me much better chances surviving as a self-employed translator. It paid off and at the moment I'm mostly translating IT related marketing texts and user guides for several different clients.

I've been freelancing for almost a decade now (6 years full-time). I was meant to find an in-house translator position after a year or so but I still haven't had time to start looking. This is a peculiar job as you never know what challenges the day will bring, but for sure you learn something new every day. Sometimes it's very quiet for a while and some weeks are so busy that there's hardly no time to sleep. I've been very lucky to find reliable clients (I've had some



very bad ones too...) and get enough work to make a living. Working in the translation agencies gave me a good insight of the industry, a good network of contacts around the world and also enough knowledge to make sure I'm not being ripped off.

Although things are going rather well, I am at a crossroads at the moment. Last year was super busy, and long days in front of the computer caught on me. By November and approximately half a million translated words later I ended up in a hospital with a pretty bad slipped disc. That made me realize how important it is to learn to say no to some projects to make sure the days aren't too long and there's enough time to exercise and sleep. Now I've been forced to think some other career options but haven't got too far with that yet as I can't figure out what kind of a job would give me a possibility to use my skills, do what I like and not make me sit still the whole day. Maybe I'll buy a lottery ticket...

Author's bio

Heidi Vuorinen has been an English/Swedish/Norwegian into Finnish translator since early 2004. She has an MA degree in Advanced Scandinavian Translation Studies and she works mainly on IT related texts. She is based in Tampere, Finland, but dreams about relocating somewhere where it's warm year round. You can get in touch with her by emailing: vuorinen.heidi@gmail.com.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Heidi's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Nelia's Story

English has always my favourite subject at school, but after graduating from high school, I was not really sure where it would take me... I started studying law at the University of Rouen (France), but I realized my mistake within a couple of months and switched back to studying English. I really started liking translation in my second year. I spent my third year in the University of Southampton (UK) as an Erasmus student in 2000-2001. During the time I was in Southampton, I had classes in urban politics and my father, who was in France, happened to be studying urban sociology for a postgraduate programme. He saw one of my textbooks during my Christmas break and asked if, by any chance, it had been translated. I replied that I didn't think so as it was an academic work: it seemed unlikely. I didn't translate this book, but his question gave me the idea to translate a chapter of it for my thesis the next year. I then graduated with a specialization in translation, but I still couldn't picture myself working as a translator. I had no idea how the industry worked, what fields I wanted to work in, how to find clients and more importantly, I didn't really have any role models of non-literary translators.

So I just decided to do something else. I had been working night and weekend shifts in an admin job at a hospital for a year and I kept doing this job for two more years after graduating. Then I had the opportunity to become a civil servant and worked as a financial officer in another hospital for about a year and a half. In 2006, I managed to combine two sectors I liked – health and languages – and became an international project assistant in a school of public health. This allowed me to finally use languages at work and I naturally started doing some translation and interpreting work in this job. At some point, I was forced to realize that this was my favourite part of the job, so I asked for a paid leave to go back to university and attended the same postgraduate course than Louise in Brest, from which I graduated in 2010. My initial idea was to gain new skills, obtain a fully official masters degree (i.e. 5 years of study), and maybe do some small translation jobs “on the side” of my day job. However, during the course of the degree, something just “clicked” and I realized this was what I wanted to do when I grow up – even if I was already 29 at the time!

The deal was that I had to go back to work with my employer full-time after graduating, and it was still a bit reassuring for me: I had gained confidence in my translation skills, but I still felt insecure about freelancing full-time. I started my freelance activity by working on evenings and weekends for the agency where I had done my internship,



then I found other clients and I also started being active on social media, which I think was quite positive for my business. I quit my day job for good in May 2012 and I have not regretted my decision for a second since then. I like working freelance, the responsibility it involves, and the fact that, through the diversity of translation projects, you are learning new things every single day. I am lucky enough to have a steady flow of work and income, as well as an incredible network of colleagues both locally and internationally. Now, most of my work comes through colleagues or colleagues' recommendations. I am also a member of two professional associations (SFT and ITI). I have been asked to present webinars as well as communications during conferences and I am very honoured to be offered the opportunity to give back to the translation community.

Author's bio

Nelia Fahloun studied English-speaking Literature and Culture in Rouen (France) and graduated in 2002. After an administrative career in the health sector, she spent a year studying translation at Brest University (France) and graduated in 2010. She started her freelance translation business first on a part-time basis and since May 2012, she has been translating full time, specializing in marketing, PR and legal translation. She also co-hosts local translator networking events and is a SFT and Associate ITI member.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Nelia's Story



So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Scheherezade's Story

I have always wanted to live through words, even as a child, when I devoured book after book, reading under the blanket, in secret, so my parents wouldn't complain.

At six I started taking English classes and then it all began. For me, translating sentences from one language to another was like a game and reading English texts was like cracking a code. In fact, at that time I also used to take swimming lessons, and when I had to choose one thing or another (there was no money for so many extra classes) it was clear: I wanted to continue my English lessons. Mind you, I was never very good at sports anyway.

As a teenager I loved BritPop, I spent hours listening to music and translating the lyrics of Blur, Oasis and the likes and soon it all became clear: translation was my passion. When I had to decide on a career I did not hesitate and chose Translation and Interpreting. Months before finishing I sent résumés to several translation agencies and started translating from the very word go, though I also started teaching English to have a regular salary.

As I wanted to specialize in something I was really passionate about, I did postgraduate studies in Literary Translation the year after I finished the degree. I met several excellent teachers there and received first-hand tips to forge my future. A teacher recommended me to a major publisher in Spain and began translating for them. Meanwhile, I sent résumés to other publishers, with more or less success.

After years of working with the same customers, I decided to try my hand at Audiovisual Translation and I started subtitling movies. I enjoyed the experience so much that in 2010 I did a master's degree in Audiovisual Translation and I fell in love with dubbing, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing and audio description for the blind and visually impaired.

Throughout these years of practice I have learned that you should not stop learning or let yourself be overcome by difficulties. Look for jobs, find new customers, specialize and be bold! Don't let people discourage you! You can live in a comfort zone, but you have to be willing to be courageous when it counts. Not many people know, for instance, that the origin of the microblog Pin up translator (<http://pinuptranslator.tumblr.com>) came from trying to come up with something original when sending out cover letters and résumés to publishers.



Although things are going well and every day I have more translation work (I have even set up a small translation agency with two other translators), I still teach, hoping I can fly away one day and devote body and soul to what I like best: translating.

Author's bio

Scheherezade Suria, a literary translator, and language enthusiast from a very early age, she took a degree in Translation and Interpretation (Pompeu Fabra University, 2000-2004), followed by a postgraduate course in Literary Translation (IDEC-Pompeu Fabra University, 2004-2005) along with a master's degree in Audiovisual Translation (Autonomous University of Barcelona, 2010-2011). Her extensive experience thus far has been centred on permanent collaborations with a series of different agencies and publishers. She has a broad-based knowledge of specialised literary and audiovisual translation from English into Spanish and Catalan. In the eight years that she has been working as a translator she has translated over twenty books, covering a wide range of subjects (romantic fiction, children's books, essays) and has also subtitled dozens of films, such as *Madagascar*, *Shrek*, *Kung Fu Panda* or *Puss in Boots*. She also took part in the dubbing work for the series *The Good Guys* as well as working on audio description for blind people. In love with her work, and immensely passionate about the different branches of translation, Scheherezade also has her own blog, *En la luna de Babel* (<http://enlalunadebabel.com>), where she shows off her versatility, accompanied by an insatiable curiosity with regard to the many and varying aspects of language and its translation.

So, graduation! A Translator? And then, what?

Scheherezade's Story