



Careers in Translation

What needs translating?

Anything and everything!

Accounts, advertisements, annual reports, blogs, books, brochures, computer games, contracts, cosmetics packaging, film scripts, information leaflets, instruction manuals, insurance claims, invoices, knitting patterns, market research questionnaires, marketing campaigns, maps, medical documents, menus, musical scores, newspaper articles, patents, pharmaceutical dossiers, promotional posters, recipes, research papers, software and websites – all these and more need translation from one language to another.

What kind of jobs are available for qualified translators?

In-house translator

As an in-house translator, you might be employed full-time, part-time or on a contract basis as part of a company's permanent staff.

Major engineering firms, international organisations, legal and financial institutions as well as press agencies are among those that maintain a permanent staff of translators.

Some games companies also employ a team of in-house translators to cover the languages of their principal markets.

In-house roles are often junior positions, enabling you to gain practical experience in a professional translation environment or to gain a degree of specialist knowledge of a particular industry.

Freelance translator

Freelance translation gives you greater flexibility in the type of subject matter you specialise in and allows you to build up a portfolio of clients.

Potential clients for freelancers include multinationals, international governmental and non-governmental organisations and, of course, translation companies or agencies.

Flexibility and being your own boss are benefits of working freelance, but you must be disciplined to work independently and prepared to be persistent and patient while you build up a client base.

There's no limit to the specialisms you can work on – from translating novels or non-fiction to the latest computer game; from car manuals to the leaflet inside the last box of headache tablets you bought. All these documents need translation at some point!

Localisation project manager

Localisation is the translation and cultural adaptation of digital content for local markets.

You could work on localisation projects on an in-house or freelance basis.

Areas for localisation include websites, software, multimedia and information systems.

Localisation requires specific project management skills too. As well as your language skills, you'll need IT expertise and an eye for detail.

Translation project manager

Translation project management is a dynamic industry to work in. Opportunities exist in major multinational companies as well as SMEs throughout the UK.

The work is varied - you could be managing a range of translation projects at any one time, from initial quotation through to completion, liaising with freelance translators, proofreaders and clients during the course of the project. In the meantime, you might be booking interpreters for an international business meeting, or arranging a voiceover for an overseas marketing campaign.

In addition to your language expertise, you'll need organisational skills, the ability to multitask and work to deadlines in a commercial environment, as well as a flair for communicating with a wide range of people and personalities.

Editor, proofreader

Editing and proofreading are essential to any translation project and, as a result, there is a high demand for linguists in this type of role.

Editors will refine and revise a translation (without making changes for the sake of it, of course!) to ensure it is appropriate for the context.

Proofreaders will check through a text for typographic, spelling or grammatical errors.

Translations that are produced as text and then dropped into a design template, such as a brochure or packaging text, must be checked to make sure that the text fits the page layout and is not obscured by a graphic or a photo – this is called page proofing. When page proofing, you won't necessarily be checking your own language, so these roles require good language awareness as well as attention to detail.

Subtitler

Ever wondered who takes film dialogue and puts it into subtitles for the big screen? Translators, of course!

This is a really interesting, if challenging, career route for a translator – the work is varied, and the hours are flexible, but the tasks are numerous.

Subtitling can involve translation, project management and proofreading in a single role. It's not just a question of translating each piece of dialogue word for word, it must be edited to fit the screen and synchronise with the dialogue, without losing any of the meaning and nuance.

You'll need cultural knowledge and creativity for this area of work. It's a great option for anyone with an interest in film or media and languages.

Terminologist

Translation work requires glossaries – both subject and client specific. The modern translation industry also uses translation memories and other electronic translation tools as support and reference sources for working translators.

Translation companies require staff to maintain client or project specific glossaries and memories across a range of languages, in order to ensure their in-house or freelance team produces consistent and accurate translations.

It's a great way to start a career in the translation industry and get experience in a project environment, before building up to a project manager or full-time translator role.

Produced by the Routes into Languages National Network for Translation.

Led by Salford University, in partnership with Aston University, University of Bath, Heriot Watt University, University of Portsmouth and University of Westminster, the National Network for Translation was established in order to address the following issues:

- National shortage of first language English translators and interpreters
- Concentration on Western European Languages in current HE translation course provision
- Low national profile of careers in translation
- Need to develop stronger cooperation between course providers and potential employers.

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