



How about some Medical Translation?

Early 2014, I made the decision to move business and legal to the sidelines to concentrate on medical, healthcare and life sciences.

I had been preparing for it over the years, and felt ready to take on the responsibility of becoming a medical translator.

As a responsible translator, I should stick to the areas I am proficient in, and never venture into anything for which I am not qualified, right?

Because, when I agree to translate a medical, legal or scientific paper, for example, I am putting my reputation on the line, and risking my pocket, should I fail to deliver to satisfaction, am I not? I got mouths to feed!

I have found that a translator's word has lost its credibility in some circles, it seems. Perhaps, because there are so many people today offering translation services, many of them not really qualified to do so.

I can't really blame clients then if they don't take my word for it, when I say I am qualified to work with medical terminology. I understand when they say they need to see hard proof of my academic or technical knowledge - what I put on my resume, to them, just won't suffice.

They want to see copies of my credentials and certifications.

Who would be the best PRO to work on medical documents? Medics who are linguists or linguists who are medics?

I believe that people do not go to med school so they can become translators. Well, some do, and end up becoming great linguists too.

Still, why demand medical professionals be exclusively the ones to translate a medical document. Is that not setting the bar too high? Even when the linguist is trained and experienced in medical lingo and stuff, but not a health professional?

I believe that a linguist who has spent time studying and specializing in medical knowledge and terminology is perfectly able to translate most medical documents.

And s/he should be paid well for it, no discrimination, whatsoever.

Yet, there are people who still cling to the belief that only a degree-holding professional SHOULD translate their work.

I think it is unfair to say that one who has no college degree in the field of interest cannot become, by training and then experience, a technical expert in that area, to deliver quality translation work

Translators are, or become, by the nature of our work, not just linguists, but technicians, researchers, scientists, writers, consultants and scholars as well - with or without formal training.

And if clients want a super qualified translator, they should also know that it does not come cheap. I know this has become a huge issue, with rates dropping, professionals from all over the world - different standards and costs of life - taking their place in the sun.

College and continuing education, even with the Internet and all, are still, expensive, and we should be paid accordingly for our work, for our investment in knowledge so we can serve the world, don't you think?

And if you want to stand out in this increasingly competitive industry, it is essential, take it from me, that you leave your comfort zone, and look to master something other than your black-belt kung-fu right now!

Believe me, even if you've just started in this trade, you should start working to become a "navy seal" in a high-demand area as soon as you can! Even if it is an area that reminds you of those veggies your mom used to force you to eat when you were a child!

Don't just give up!

If you consider yourself a specialist in a field, but you don't have that college degree or technical diploma the client requires, make sure you have a portfolio with sample translations, published works, and clients who are willing to recommend you.

Still, sometimes it is just better to go back to college if you can. Take medical or healthcare-related courses, participate in extension or vocational programs, go into new areas, or refresh what you know!

Stay at the top of your game, adapt to the market's needs.

It is never too late to go back to school, you know!

Take the first step.

If you want to start in the medical translation industry, I recommend you introduce yourself to the terminology by taking a free course on the subject, such as the one offered by Des Moines University - <https://www.dmu.edu/medterms/>.

There are also webinars and online courses on ProZ.com, designed and instructed by experienced professionals who are willing to share their secrets to success.

You can also join the medical translation chapters of your translation association, or even become a student member of the American Medical Writers Association (if English is your target language), and take their "Essential Skills Certificate Program" for starting medical writers.

And try to have fun! I know I do!



Author: Verlow Woglo Junior

I became a linguist shortly after high-school in Nigeria (1988-1994), as a Portuguese-English interpreter in a Nigerian-Brazilian company. My duties included translating letters and calls between offices in Nigeria and Brazil. On returning to Brazil (1997), I became a teacher (EFL), and eventually, a technical translator (2000). I have been a ProZ.com PRO Network Member since 2014, and a very proud Volunteer with Translators without Borders. Ha! And I also try to write stuff, so please bear with me!