



## Freelancer spotlight

Gain inspiration from other translator's stories

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Language pairs:  
EN-DE

SDL\*

### How long have you been a translator?

I first became a freelance translator right after graduating, and launched my business a second time when my children were old enough. Altogether I have been working as a translator for 9 years.

### What was your path into translation and/or freelancing?

The path was quite natural – my mother was an enthusiastic translator (and still is). My childhood memories include her speaking into a dictaphone, typing, and then calling the courier to take her translation to the customers. In the 80s, the dictaphone and typewriter turned into an enormous word processor and printer of several square meters' footprint, making the house tremble when operated, until at last PCs were invented. So I knew what I was up to when I started off as a freelancer, which may have been an advantage. I knew what kind of texts to expect, that deadlines must never be exceeded, or how to tame your customers, if necessary.

### What kind of texts do you usually translate?

I mostly translate technical texts like software manuals, instructions for use, or product descriptions, but also medical texts like informed consents for clinical studies, package information leaflets etc. There are free forms of text too, like press releases, inspection reports, staff training material (you learn a lot!) and correspondence.

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### How does a CAT tool help you?

Technical texts are certainly the kind of text where a translator profits most from a CAT tool. It helps you to closely stick to the terminology, which is essential- imagine using a manual where the same part is referred to differently on every page. If you are working together with colleagues, a CAT tool is the only way to ensure consistency between the sections of the text. It is not quite as essential for free text forms, but still helpful as you only need to look up the terms once. It definitely speeds up translation enormously.

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### **Does it make a difference having a client who understands translation and its challenges?**

It's good to know that the team members are translators themselves and may shake their heads over strange texts or customer preferences just as I do. No need to romanticize everything you are presented with on the screen.

When a translation hasn't turned out so well it's okay to hear criticism from people who know from experience that one text might be more difficult than the other. Positive feedback is worth all the more. Not that I receive feedback very often, but I don't expect it either. There is enough other work to do. "Your feedback is your next order" is what I have been told by an SDL worker – this feedback has been all right in my case so I am absolutely content with that!

### **What is the most unusual text you've ever had to translate?**

I remember working on a lawyer's letter of complaint written on behalf of a Central Asian carpet dealer who felt he had been cheated. It was a beautiful challenge to transform 3 pages of tearful, flowery Asian rhetoric into a 1-page sober, matter-of-fact list of charges for a North German police-station, while leaving some delicacies of the original text so as to reflect the writer's concern.

Naturally, technical texts are not quite as delightful but I love the diversity of what you are thrown at in the course of a day – from pretzel recipes to clinical studies, inspection reports on industrial plants (I've been everywhere, virtually), lulling software manuals, and back to appetizing quark balls. You never get bored.

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