# Freelancer spotlight

**Gain inspiration from other translator's stories**

## Rowena Woolner

**Language pairs: EN-FR**

### How long have you been a translator?

I've been a freelance translator now for over 20 years, which makes me feel very old when I say it, but honestly I'm not!

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

I did a French and history degree in Nottingham and then got my first job after graduating working for an engineering company where one of my primary roles was to liaise with the overseas customers. After five years in a high-stress environment I needed a change! I was also desperate to have a dog and doing freelance translation from home seemed to fit the bill as it meant I could use the skills and contacts I had and also look after and enjoy a dog properly. I left my job, got my beautiful dog from the RSPCA and started working for myself after attending a course on how to set up in business.

### How have you seen things change over the years?

In my view, freelance translation has seen a lot of changes, particularly in terms of QA requirements, which have ramped up considerably, and, whilst sometimes it can be tedious to complete checklists and logs, etc., I do actually think that quality checks in translation are highly important. Job sizes range from tiny (a couple of lines) to jobs that can take several weeks on their own. I also get a very diverse workload from SDL which is no longer just straight translation, but includes foreign language review, target-only review, conversions from one flavour of English to another, and LSO (Linguistic Sign Off aka layout checking) among others. I really enjoy this variety as it means you don't get stuck in a rut. Personally, the volume of work I receive has increased over the years, as has the range of subjects. As technology evolves, so the amount of technology-based texts increases. However, the mass of information available on the Internet on all manner of topics means this growing range is easier to accommodate.

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## What sort of texts do you translate?

The variety of texts is immense and I can go from a risk report to a fashion catalogue to a contract of sale all in one day... not forgetting technical specifications, marketing campaigns and philosophical tracts to name just a few.

## How does a CAT tool help?

Once you've got to grips with it, a CAT tool can be a real time-saver. It auto-propagates exact matches and highlights partial matches. It also helps to ensure consistency and harmonisation throughout a translation as you can easily check how you previously translated a particular term or phrase, or how it was translated in a previous document by another translator. Also, the quality assurance tools flag up not just linguistic issues but also formatting errors or preferences so you can deliver a finished document that's more polished and tailored to an individual customer's requirements.

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

Yes it does. It's far easier to discuss a linguistic issue with someone with a similar background, and also to bounce ideas around and share opinions. I get feedback on my work from clients — obviously the positive feedback is great, but sometimes there are negatives and you have to be prepared to accept this for the constructive criticism that it is and learn from it. Feedback is part of any job and translation is no exception! It is possible for complacency to creep in when you're working alone and feedback is important to prevent that and keep you on your toes!

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

I can't recall any particularly "weird and wonderful" texts, but some descriptions of ancient artefacts and works of art can be quite graphic(!), while human interest documents such as the two sides of a personal dispute can make for very interesting and absorbing reading!

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