

informATIO

March 2006

Number 1

Willkommen!

von Ilse Wong, beglaubigte Übersetzerin (in Kanada)

Jede Sprache birgt ihre eigenen Idiosynkrasien, die für den Übersetzer bzw. Dolmetscher besondere Herausforderungen darstellen. Für einige von uns heißt es, die Unterschiede der auf Schriftzeichen und alphabet-basierten Sprachsysteme zu überbrücken. Andere unter uns müssen subtile Sprachregeln hinsichtlich Geschlecht, Kaste oder Regionalismen berücksichtigen. Und wieder andere sehen sich der Schwierigkeit gegenüber gestellt, Begriffe oder Ausdrücke einer Sprache erklären zu müssen, für die es einfach keine äquivalenten Begriffe oder Ausdrücke in der anderen Sprache gibt.

Glücklicherweise stehen Übersetzer und Dolmetscher, besonders jene, die freiberuflich arbeiten, mit diesen

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Welcome!

By Ilse Wong, C. Tran. (Canada)

Every language presents translators or interpreters with its own idiosyncrasies. For some of us, these challenges may involve the complexities of straddling character-based language systems and alphabet-based ones. Others among us have to factor in subtle language rules involving gender, caste, or regionalism. And yet others face the issues of explaining terms in one language that simply have no counterpart in another.

Fortunately, translators and interpreters, particularly those in the independent category, do not need to stand—or feel—alone in the face of the unique difficulties of their languages. One of the benefits of ATIO membership is the opportunity to compare notes with others in the

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On the Lighter Side...

By Nancy McInnis, C. Tran. (Canada)

InformATIO tries hard to provide you with interesting articles that pertain to your professional life. But what about your personal life? Ever wonder what pet a terminologist likes to curl up next to? Or what an interpreter does for fun? Next time you need a break from your demanding occupation, pick up a cup of coffee, lean back in your chair and turn to this column, where we will try to break the isolation surrounding stay-at-home professionals and show that you are not alone!

There you sit, language professional extraordinaire, your feet resting on the beautifully handcarved footstool you crafted yourself, your artwork adorning the walls, your head awash in the beautiful strains of your favourite music, and twelve little beasties curled beside you. Sheer delight!

Could there possibly be others just like you?

That's what we wanted to know too!

Please take a couple of minutes to visit our website at http://www.atio.on.ca/Membership/Survey/survey_form.asp and complete the on-line survey about pets and hobbies.

Results next issue.

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besonderen Schwierigkeiten ihrer Sprache nicht allein da und brauchen sich nicht allein zu fühlen. Einer der vielen Vorteile, die die ATIO-Mitgliedschaft bietet, ist die Möglichkeit, mit Kollegen und Kolleginnen Erfahrungen austauschen zu können und auf diese Weise neue Wege für alte Probleme zu finden.

Dieser Austausch von Erfahrungen und Informationen kann so stattfinden, dass man sich zunächst auf spezifische Sprachen konzentriert. Auf diese Weise können Mitglieder, die in der selben Sprache arbeiten, von den besonderen Fähigkeiten, Techniken und Erfahrungen der gleichsprachigen Mitglieder profitieren. Dies kann unter Umständen auch anderssprachigen Kollegen und Kolleginnen dienen, da einige Erkenntnisse sprachenübergreifend gelten, egal um welche/s Sprachenpaar/e es sich handelt.

Um den Stein ins Rollen zu bringen, wird diese erste Sonderausgabe von *InformATIO* der deutschen Sprache, die ein nicht unbedeutendes Segment des Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschmarktes in Ontario darstellt, gewidmet sein.

In künftigen Ausgaben haben wir vor, weitere Fremdsprachen abzudecken, und zwar sowohl weit verbreitete (Kantonesisch, Spanisch) als auch exotische Sprachen (Urdu, Pandschabi, Tamilisch). Unsere Artikel werden Probleme, regionale Sprachunterschiede, Übersetzungstools, den Markt für Fremdsprachen in Ontario und im restlichen Kanada behandeln, und die Frage, wie Übersetzer und Dolmetscher ihre Fähigkeiten auf dem Markt anbieten.

Lassen Sie uns wissen, mit welchen Problemen und Herausforderungen Sie konfrontiert sind. Ihre Sprache mag Welten von der Ihrer Kollegen und Kolleginnen entfernt sein, letztendlich haben wir jedoch alle sehr ähnliche Probleme.

Wenn Sie Vorschläge für Artikel haben oder gern einen eigenen Artikel beitragen möchten, würden wir uns freuen, von Ihnen zu hören. Bitte schicken Sie uns ein Email oder einen Brief mit Ihren Vorschlägen an ATIO unter InformATIO@atio.on.ca



profession. This opportunity translates (no pun intended) into chances for learning new ways to handle old problems.

In this connection, one way to exchange information and experiences is to focus on specific languages. This way, members working in the same languages can benefit from each other's specific skills, techniques, and experiences.

And this may help even those working in other languages, because some insights will hold true regardless of one's language pair(s).

To get the ball rolling, this first special issue of *InformATIO* is dedicated to German, a not insignificant segment of the translating and interpreting market in Ontario.

We intend to cover other foreign languages in future issues. The articles will cover problems such as regional differences in the language, tools the translators use, the market for such foreign languages in Ontario and the rest of Canada, and how the translators and interpreters market their skills. We would like to cover the more widely spoken languages (Cantonese, Spanish) as well as the more exotic ones (Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil).

Let us hear about your problems and challenges. Your language may be vastly different from that of your other colleagues', but in the end, we all share very similar concerns.

If anyone has suggestions for articles, or would like to submit articles, we would be happy to hear from you. Please send an E-mail or a letter to ATIO (InformATIO@atio.on.ca) with your suggestions.

From Research Associate to Biomedical Translator

By Ursula Vielkind, C. Tran. (Canada)

After spending 25 years in several research labs, I am finally doing work that suits me best—I am a biomedical translator, working from German into English and vice versa. I mostly translate medical textbooks, but sometimes also medical records, biotechnology patents, research grant applications, and scientific articles. The following describes how I made the transition from scientist to translator.

My story begins in Germany, where I studied sciences at the Justus Liebig University Giessen. I gained a broad natural science background by taking courses in botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology, anthropology, genetics, virology, and cell biology. I earned my Ph.D. (Dr. rer. nat.) in 1972, and my future as a developmental biologist looked promising. In 1980, I came to Canada to help build a cancer research lab.

Unfortunately, things didn't work out as expected, and I found myself again looking for work. Being more interested in research rather than teaching and administration, all that was available to me were short-term contracts as a research associate. While I was working at the University of Guelph in the early 1990s, colleagues began asking me to translate some German scientific papers into English, and I realized that I really liked doing this. It is intellectually stimulating and rewarding.

I started earning a bit of money doing translations in my spare time. I soon realized that I could change my career and become a scientific translator. When my last research contract ended in 1996, I thought, "This is the time to jump." I have good writing skills in both languages, and I enjoy working on a text to make it right, both in terms of content and comprehension.

What I didn't know about was business. So, I took a 2-week course on how to start your own business. At the end of the course, I had to choose a business name that would stick with me for a long time to come. I decided to market myself under my name, Ursula Vielkind, Ph.D., followed by an explanation of what I do: German/English Translations in Biological Sciences.

My next step was to join professional associations in my field, such as the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO), the American Writers Association (AMWA), and the American Translators Association (ATA). Apart from networking at big conferences and local meetings, these groups offer professional development seminars, group health

insurance and, last but not least, professional liability insurance. I also belong to the Editors' Association of Canada (EAC) and the Halton-Peel Communications Association (HPCA), both of which focus on communication skills and hold regular meetings in the Toronto area, where I live.

My marketing strategy is to have a short profile in the on-line directories of the associations I belong to. I also registered with several on-line databases for translation services, and I subscribed to several translator e-mail lists where I ask for, or provide, help with terminology or information on payment practices of translation agencies. By doing so, my e-mail signature goes out to translators and agencies around the world, complete with my contact details.

In 2002, I received my certification from ATIO for both my language combinations. In addition, ATIO recognized my specialization in biosciences. Now clients can be sure that, as well as being an experienced scientist, I am also a competent translator.

A longer version of this article first appeared in May 2002 on the website of SCIENCE - Next Wave
<http://nextwave.sciencemag.org/>

New Editorial Team for 2006

By Alana Hardy, C. Tran. (Canada)

The *InformATIO* Editorial Team strives to deliver issues that are both informative and interesting to our readers. Of course, this would not be possible without the involvement of our Team members. We recently welcomed our newest members of the Editorial Team, Nancy McInnis and Ilse Wong. You may already know Nancy as the Vice-President of ATIO and Director of the Independent Translators Committee, and Ilse as ATIO Secretary. They join Editorial Team members Michel Trahan, Catherine Bertholet and Alana Hardy. Fabrice Cadieux is leaving the Team after eight years, and we thank him for his invaluable contribution to *InformATIO*.

A Tribute to Creighton Douglas

By Ken Larose, President



Creighton and Althea Douglas at the ATIO 80th anniversary dinner held at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in September 2001

Those who encountered Creighton could be forgiven for thinking that his wisdom came from a lengthy career in the translation field; but in fact, he came late to translation. His wife Althea has told me that it was his hobby in retirement following their move to Ottawa from Montreal in 1991. Some hobby! Some retirement! Creighton received his B.Sc. and a graduate Diploma in Management from McGill University, after which he worked with Canadian Marconi Co. as part of the team that brought television to the United Nations in New York in 1950, and then with CFCF (radio and TV) Montreal, the National Film Board of Canada, the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission, and IMAX Corporation.

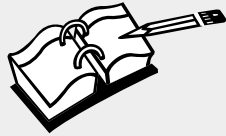
After successfully passing the CTTIC exam, he not only worked as a translator, but began to contribute in many capacities, not just to ATIO, but to CTTIC as well, where he served for many years as the Chair of the Board of Examiners. It was Creighton who tutored me and so

many others through the ATIO preparatory course. He was generous but firm in all of his roles, and was always able to find a way of dealing with problems, disputes and thorny issues in a manner that kept everyone happy. He was treasurer of ATIO for as long as I can remember, and had recently agreed to another year on our Board of Directors.

Like me, he believed that experience in various fields could be invaluable to a translator. It was precisely because of his experience in film that I asked him to join four other ATIO translators to translate the New York Museum of Modern Art's POSITIF 50 Years into English. Creighton's contribution to that project was, typically, invaluable.

With Creighton's passing we have lost much of our corporate memory. We will certainly never forget him and his many selfless contributions to our Association.

Calendar of Events



✓ MARCH 2006

World Congress on the Power of Language

March 6-10, 2006

Bangkok, Thailand

Information: <http://www.poweroflanguage.org/>

✓ MAY 2006

La traduction médico-pharmaceutique au Canada

May 8, 2006

Université de Montréal, amphithéâtre Ernest-Cormier

Montreal, Quebec

Information: <http://www.grouperaduction.ca>

The Board of Directors of the
Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario
regretfully announces the death of

Elsie Saumure

ATIO long-standing member

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The Editorial Committee of *InformATIO* reserves the right not to publish, or to edit with the author's consent, any article submitted or commissioned for publication. Any opinions expressed (except in articles signed in an official capacity) are those of the authors and are not endorsed by the Association.

Special thanks to:

Janette Bertrand, Michel Bérubé, Denis Bousquet, Michèle Bradbury, Alana Hardy, Ken Larose, Nancy McInnis, Julien Marquis, Maha Takla, Ursula Vielkind, Ilse Wong.

RESULTS OF THE 2005 SURVEY OF INDEPENDENT TRANSLATORS

By Nancy McInnis C. Tran. (Canada)

Maha Takla C. Tran. (Canada)

Purpose of the 2005 ATIO Survey*

The 2005 survey was sent to all independent translators, regardless of affiliation category (Certified, Candidate, student or retired) and language combination. However, as our members generally work in either official languages or foreign languages, the results are broken down based on these two categories.

The survey asked for personal information such as age, education and geographic location, but it was primarily concerned with information regarding professional practice, such as rates, resources, and the translator's perception of his or her professional situation.

Rate of Response

A total of 860 surveys were sent out and 193 responses were received. Of these, 112 came back from translators working in official languages (99 Certified and 13 Candidates) and 81 from translators working in foreign languages (53 Certified and 29 Candidates). This is an overall response rate of 22.4%. For comparison purposes, the previous two surveys, conducted in 2000 and 1996, had response rates of 15.8% and 18.8% respectively. Therefore, the current results are statistically valid and should be representative of independent translator practices.

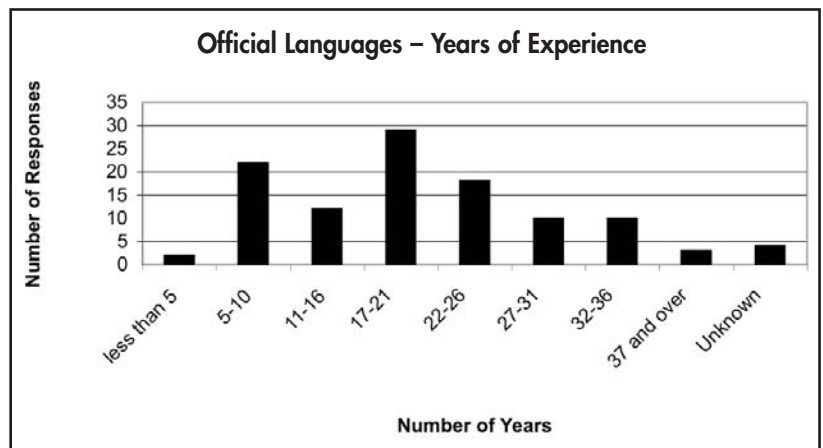
Please note that percentages will not always work out to 100% due to rounding off, respondents' failing to answer certain questions and indicating more than one category for other questions.

*** NB: This is a report on current practices as reported by ATIO members in response to the survey conducted in 2005. Please note that these results are for your information only. They are not intended to dictate the rates you charge, the hours you work or the clients you take!**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

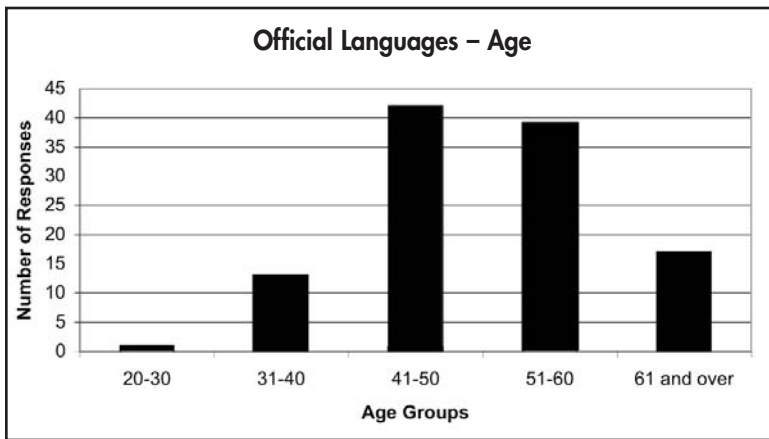
Years of Experience

Independent translators working in official languages are an experienced group! The largest group of respondents (26%) had between 17 and 21 years of experience, followed closely by those with 5 to 10 years (20%) and those with 22 to 26 years (16%). As proof that our profession is incredibly challenging and never boring, 20% of respondents had more than 25 years of experience. We obviously love what we do because we are not going through a midlife crisis and changing careers!



Age

On the flip side though, this also means that the average age of translators is increasing. 37.5% of respondents are between the ages of 41 and 50, and 35% are 51 to 60 years old. For comparison purposes, the percentage of respondents over the age of 51 was 30% in 1996, 32.9% in 2000 and now 35% in 2005. But it is the incredible lack of younger respondents that is most alarming. In 1996, 22% of respondents were 35 or younger. In 2000, that percentage dropped to 17.8%. And in 2005, only 12.5% of respondents were 40 or younger! Clearly we must work hard to attract talented young people to the profession or we won't have to worry about paying for our retirement because retirement itself won't be an option!

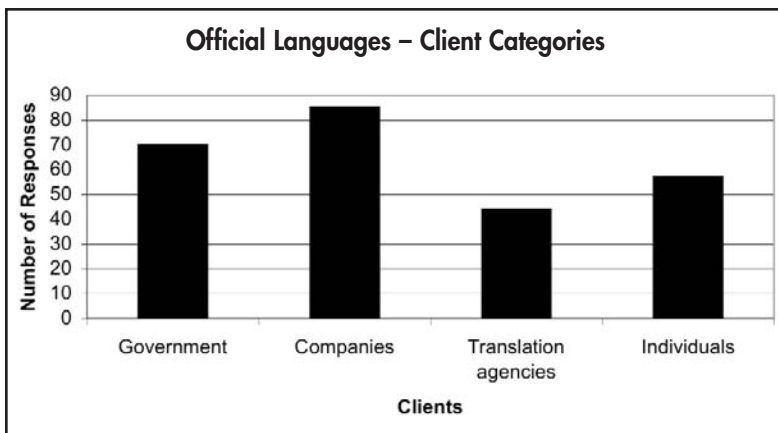
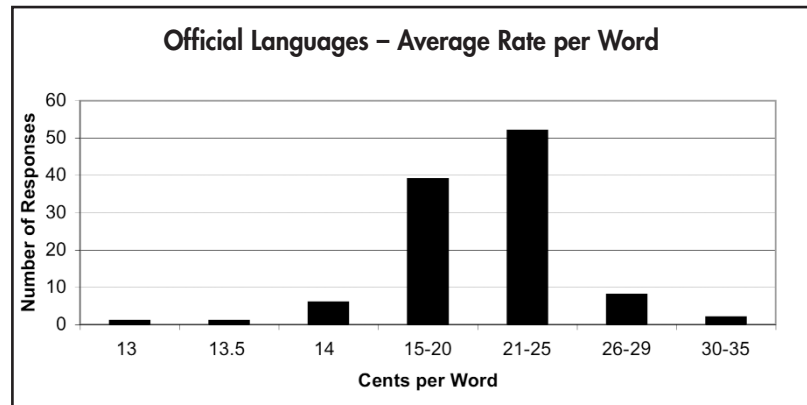


It should also be noted that F-E translation rates tend to be somewhat lower than E-F rates, possibly because F-E translation represents only 20% of the official languages market. However, no distinction was made for the purposes of this survey.

Results from the 2005 survey compare favourably with those from surveys in previous years. The 1996 survey revealed that the average rate was 19.3 cents per word. In 2000, the average rate had dropped slightly to 18.7 cents. Today, nearly half of

Client Categories

Of the 112 independent translators working in official languages, 75% worked full time and 25% worked part time. The survey then asked respondents to identify their clients by broad groups: governments, companies, translation agencies and individuals. Twenty-five percent of respondents have clients in three of the given categories and 37.5% have clients in two.



independent translators are charging between 21 and 25 cents a word. However, the author of the 2000 survey included a footnote in his results indicating that some translators were charging rates far below the average, which then had the obvious effect of lowering the average rate accordingly.

The translation world is unchanged in that regard. We all have either first- or second-hand knowledge of contracts lost to a miserable rate and agencies that deny ever paying even 15 cents a word. Consequently, the 2005 survey asked about the highs and lows of rates.

Rates

Rates and resources occupied a large part of the survey and will be discussed here at some length since this is a matter of great concern to both the individual translator and the industry as a whole.

Thirty-five percent of independent translators working in official languages said that their average rate falls between 15 and 20 cents a word, while 46% said that their average rate is 21 to 25 cents a word. This is perhaps a reflection of the number of years of experience of our independent translators.

First, the highest rates charged. Even though 46% of respondents said that their average rate was 21 to 25 cents a word, 43% said that was also the most they had ever charged. An overwhelming 75% said that they charged more for rush jobs. Some respondents expressed the premium in terms of a percentage: 12% said that they charged an additional 5-15%, 13% charged an extra 20-25% and 8% charged more than that.

However the majority of respondents gave the premium as an extra charge per word: 45% charged an extra 1-5 cents per word while 11% asked for an extra 25-30 cents.

Most respondents said that the premium charged on rush jobs was only a few cents more per word, which explains how the average rate and the maximum rate can both fall into the same narrow category. With an average rate of approximately 21 cents per word, and a premium of an extra 3 or 4 cents, or 15% to 20%, then the maximum rate charged is still 24 or 25 cents a word.

The lowest rates charged ran the gamut from working for free to 28 cents a word. However, 44% of respondents said the lowest they had ever charged was 10 to 15 cents a word, and 40% said their lowest rate was 16 to 20 cents. It is interesting to note that the percentages for the lowest rate roughly parallel the breakdown in years of experience. Forty-six percent of respondents had between 5 and 21 years of experience, and 36% had more. It would appear that experience pays!

The survey then asked independent translators how they charged—by the word or by the hour, and based on the source language or the target language. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority (93%) charged by the word, based on a count using the source language. When asked how the count was conducted, 96% of respondents said they used an electronic count, testifying to the prevalence of electronic documents and the use of e-mail.

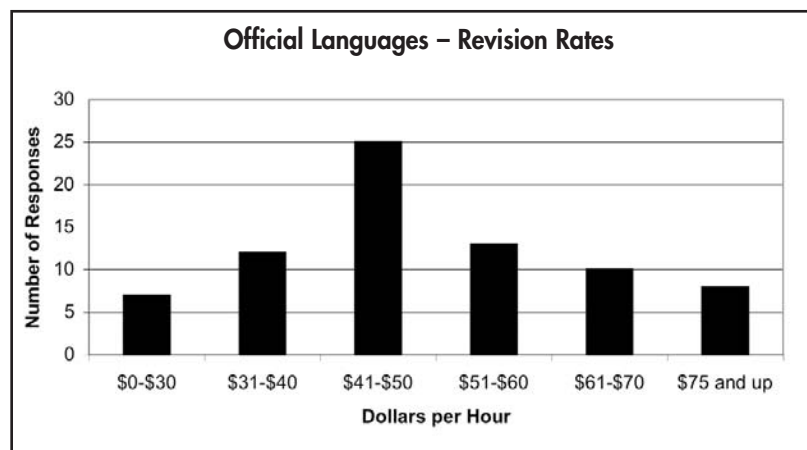
Independent translators were also asked about revision. Seventy-four percent said that they had a revision rate, and although most translation is billed by the word, the opposite appears to be true for revision. Almost all respondents indicated that they charged by the hour for revision: 30% charged \$41 to \$50 an hour, 14% charged \$31 to \$40 an hour, 16% charged \$51 to \$60, and 12% charged \$61 to \$70.

To summarize the rate situation, the survey asked independent translators if their professional situation had improved, remained the same or deteriorated. The answer was decidedly positive. Forty-seven percent of official-language respondents said their situation had improved, and 38% said it had remained the same.

Tools and Resources

Finally, the 2005 survey asked independent translators about the tools and resources they use. Termium and reference books are the clear favourites, as their use was reported by 93% of respondents. They were followed closely by on-line dictionaries in general (the Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique in particular) and translation forums. ATIO is interested to note the use of translation forums, as this indicates that independent translators value the opinion of their peers and rely on their expertise. We hope independent translators will continue to expand their networking abilities by attending the workshops and events the Association offers throughout the year.

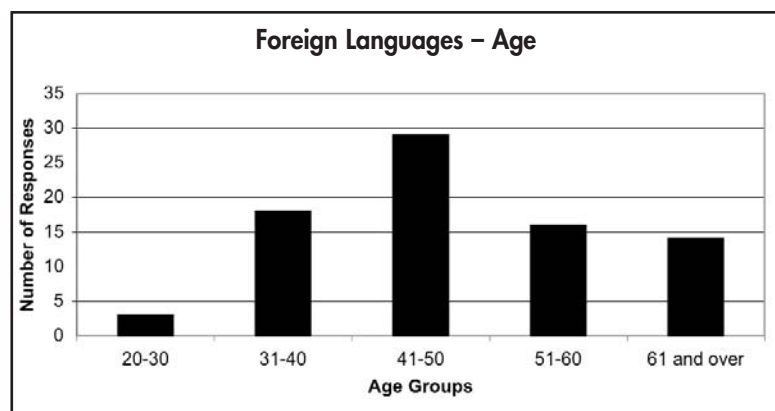
Results were somewhat unclear regarding the use of translation memory software: 27% of respondents use at least one translation memory, 31% do not, and 42% did not answer the question. Therefore it is difficult to determine the true popularity of the tools among ATIO independent translators; however, of those who said they use translation memories, 50% use Trados and 30% use LogiTerm.



FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Years of Experience

Foreign-language translators are ATIO's fastest-growing group, which is clear from the years of experience reported in the survey. Twenty-eight percent of respondents had 5 to 10 years of experience, 37% had 11 to 21 years of experience and 30% had more than 21. It is interesting to note that the largest percentage of foreign-language translators is in the early years of their career.

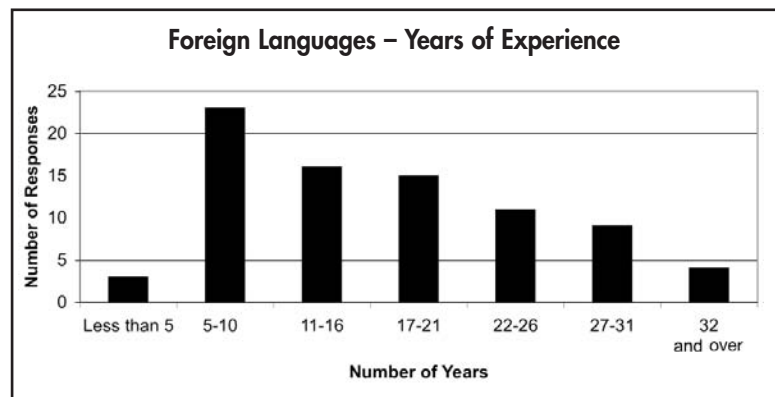


Age

The average age of foreign-language translators parallels that of official-language translators. Thirty-six percent of foreign-language translators are between the ages of 41 and 50, and 20% are between 51 and 60. Happily, 26% are 40 or younger, thus indicating that succession is less of a problem for foreign languages and confirming that this is the growth area in the Association.

Client Categories

Of the 81 independent translators working in foreign languages, there is a fairly even split between those who work full time (49%) and those who work part time (47%). This is quite different from the story for official languages, and it is a difference that is repeated in the responses to

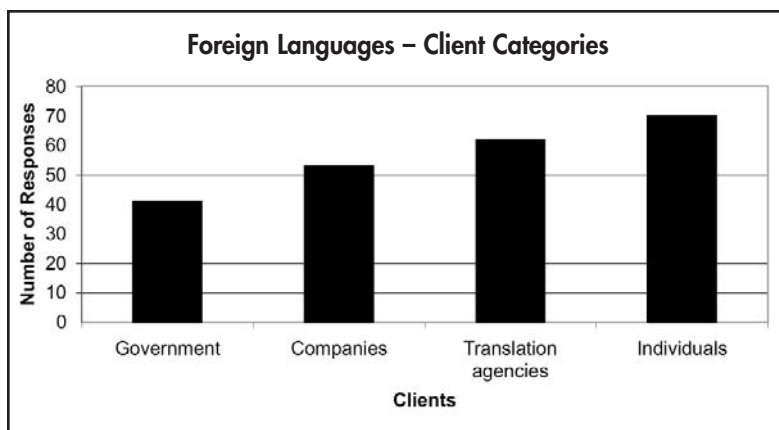


the question regarding daily output. While 67% of official-language respondents produce between 1000 and 2100 words per day, only 42% of foreign-language translators had the same output. Interestingly, fully 26% of foreign-language translators did not know what their daily output was. Unfortunately, we do not know if this is because they have simply never tracked their production, or because they do not work on a daily basis.

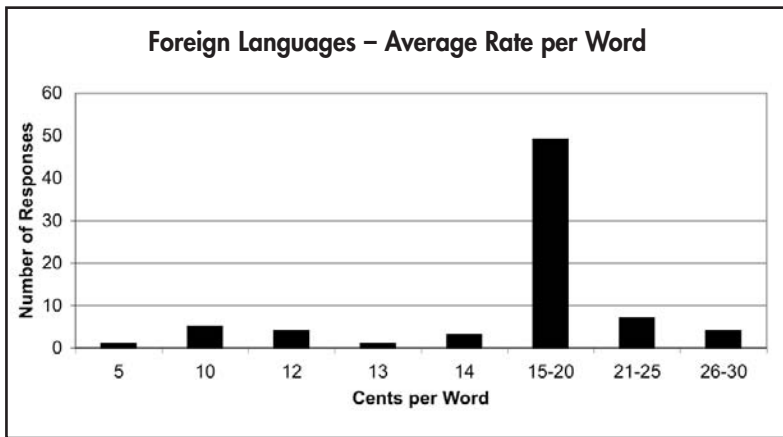
When asked to identify their clients by broad groups, 37% of foreign-language translators indicated that they have clients in all four of the given categories, 22% have clients in three categories and 28% have clients in two.

Rates

The majority of foreign-language translators (60%) charge between 15 and 20 cents a word. Only 13.5% charged more than that; however, 17% charged less than 15 cents a word. This is a great difference from official languages, where only 7% charged between 13 and



14 cents; no one reported that their average rate was below 13 cents. Are the lower average rates for foreign languages due to stiff competition from overseas, or can they be explained by the fact that 86% of foreign-language translators include individuals in their client base? Do the lower rates also explain why nearly half of foreign-language translators only work part time? Do these translators require another source of income? Or, since the largest group has between 5 and 10 years of experience, are they still trying to build their client base to the point at which it can support them? How possible is repeat business when your customers are individuals? This is clearly a



There are also differences between foreign and official-language translators when it comes time to calculate the invoice. Fully 20% of foreign-language translators charge by the hour, although their responses indicate that they may also charge by the word on occasion. Of those who charge by the word, 65% charge based on the source language, and 35% charge based on the target language.

With regard to how the count is conducted, 83% of foreign-language translators use an

whole different world from official-language translators, where the largest client categories are the government and companies.

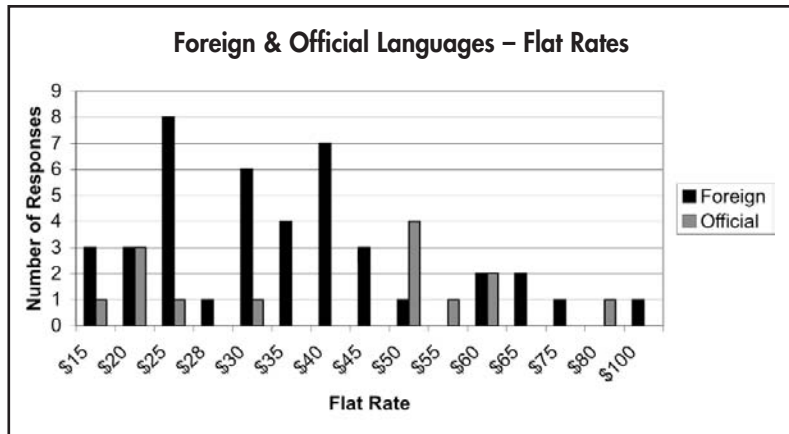
Although the average rate for foreign-language translators is lower than for official languages, at 15 to 20 cents per word, it appears to be comparable with previous surveys. In 2000, the average was 17.4 cents a word and in 1996, it was 18.3 cents.

The lowest rates charged by foreign-language translators were identical to those charged in official languages—from free to 27 cents per word. And again, the majority (57%) indicated that their lowest rate was 10 to 15 cents.

The highest rates most commonly charged appear to be quite similar as well. Forty percent of foreign-language translators say the most they have ever charged is 20 to 25 cents, compared to 43% of official-language translators, who say that it is their highest. However, only 25% of foreign-language translators say their highest rate is 26 to 35 cents, compared to almost 40% for official languages.

Like their official-language counterparts, the majority (67%) of foreign-language translators charge more for rush jobs. However, with only a few exceptions, foreign-language translators charged an additional percentage as a premium. This percentage varied widely, from 5% to 62.5%, although the most common premiums (25% of those who charged more for a rush job) were in the 10% to 20% range.

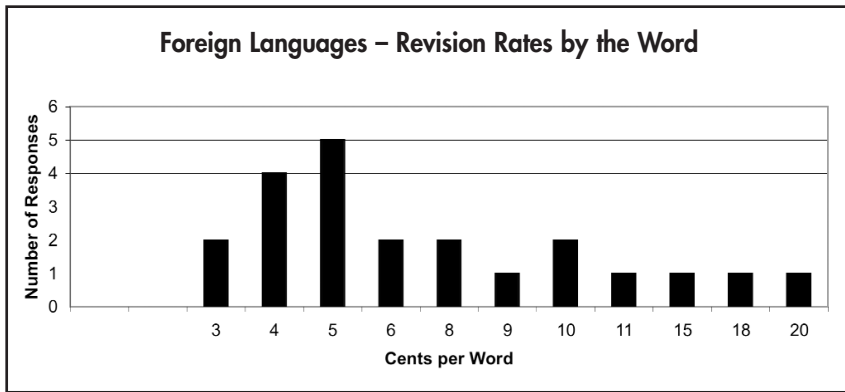
Interestingly, while only 19% of official-language translators had a flat rate for documents such as certificates and diplomas, 59% of foreign-language translators had such a rate. Along the same lines, 57% of official-language translators had a minimum for small jobs, with equal percentages indicating \$20, \$25, \$30, and so on up to \$75. However, 79% of foreign-language translators had a minimum, again split fairly evenly amongst \$15, \$20, \$25 and \$35.



electronic word count. However 16% count manually and 10% use a percentage, for example adding 10% to the count in the target language.

When asked about revision, 62% of foreign-language translators said that they had a revision rate. However, while official-language revisors clearly preferred to charge by the word, foreign-language revisors were equally likely to charge by the word or by the hour. Interestingly though, rates were all over the board, regardless of how they were calculated.

When foreign-language translators were asked to sum up their professional situation, there was proof once again that this is the growth area in the Association. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said that their situation had improved, and 27% said it had remained the same. Rates may be lower, but business is apparently on the upswing!



Tools and Resources

It is difficult to tell how much use foreign-language translators make of translation memory software, as 40% of respondents did not answer the question. Of those who did reply, as many people said they use the software as said they did not! However, of those who do use the programs, 54% use Trados and 33% use SDL/SDLX.

Foreign-language translators favour on-line dictionaries and reference books. Their use was reported by 75% and 88% of respondents respectively. Interestingly, only 41% stated that they turned to on-line translation forums for help. ATIO hopes to foster their use through its own Terminology Exchange Network. We hope you will check it often to see if you can provide a translation—or perhaps find help with a problem term of your own.

This concludes our analysis of the results of the ATIO 2005 survey of independent translators. We hope the information provided allows you to fine-tune your own marketing strategy and make 2006 your most profitable year ever.

