

interview transcript

Duration: 15 min

Date: 07.01.2015

Interviewer: teacher, student - Marta Nogal

Interviewee/Respondent: court translator –Danuta Nogal

Interview Setting: Interview conducted in the court translators' office.

The interview was conducted at 3:30 PM on Wednesday afternoon.

Affiliation with interviewee: Danuta Nogal has been working as a professional court translator and interpreter in Grudziądz (Poland). She specializes in German language and has over 30 years of experience in her field. Danuta Nogal holds a master's degree in German Language and is a sworn translator of German accredited by the Polish Ministry of Justice (no TP/2718/05). She runs an office (company) which is completely independent on its own business activities. In the 1980's, she managed to give a start to the whole new tradition in Grudziądz. The project was accredited and 'blessed' by the schoolmasters and the towns' president himself. Owing to her activities many students had an opportunity to take part in students' exchanges between The King John Sobieski's The Third Secondary School of General Education in Grudziądz and the high school in Gütersloh in Germany. Recently the program of students' exchange was mentioned in the local television, newspaper and its history celebrated in the towns' museum during its 20 years anniversary. At the moment, as a retired teacher, she is devoted to her work duties and family life.

(Start of the Interview)

Interviewer: Hello, my name is Marta and I'm a student of The English philology, dental technician and English teacher. I'm fascinated by the profession of the court translator. That is why I would like to know something more about this job and I hope I will find the answers to my questions while having a short conversation with a professional, experienced court translator- Danuta Nogal.

Interviewer: Hello

Interviewee: Hello

Interviewer: Particularly regarding to translation and interpreting what are your duties as a court translator?

Interviewee: I provide linguistic support in many various matters. Many people leaving country or coming back from abroad need their documents translated for example the residence permission or long-stay permission. Basically settlement documentation, sealed documents which are requested or provided by the authorities and companies such as birth, marriage or death certificates, court cases and trials. I also offer help in very important issues such as civil rights struggles, civil services, various types of trials and disputes, navigations, negotiations, industrial or commercial disputes and resolutions or official correspondence. I am the person who takes full responsibility for her actions and what is equally important for

the documents that I have translated and their quality that. It is my duty to translate a text in the most proper way.

Interviewer: Who are you work with on an everyday basis?

I do translations for The Police, Polish and German Ministry of Justice, various institutions, companies and private clients.

Interviewer: Your various range of dictionaries and books is really impressive. Do they really help you while working? Where do you work?

Yes, I use them constantly. My library is still developing since the 1980s'. In this profession you have to be up-to-date because every day new words are being made up. In my occupation most of my time is devoted to work at this office but many times I had to fill my duties on the request of the Ministry of Justice usually in a court room or at the police station. Basically speaking it depends who (or which institutions) really needs my service.

Interviewer: What other skills except communicational skills are useful in this occupation?

About five to ten per cent of my time is spent being involved in cooperation and consultations with my clients, whatever the way of communication is -emails or phone conversations in Polish or German language.

In my profession communication skills are definitely required and obligatory to possess but what is also important is to develop techniques that can help in doing the job. Broadening abilities, for example, are useful not only to keep your brain healthy and active but also to absorb more knowledge. That is a way of building up professional competence (also by learning new technical/medical vocabulary). I guess the proper name for this skill is versatility. About thirty to forty per cent of my time is involved with learning and memorising or doing various preparations. Being well-versed needs a lot of brain and memory training. Basically speaking, I think that what is healthy for the brain is healthy for what comes with it-well-being.

What is also worth mentioning is that this occupation teaches punctuality because documents need to be ready on time no matter if it is for the police or court. Discipline and time management are obligatory skills in my case. Organisation skills have to be elaborated to the highest level and I'm speaking not only about filling an organizer with various dates but I meant also people, ideas, plans, projects, events which are being constantly shuffled in my brain on everyday basis.

Definitely having good computer skills is useful. Sometimes clients make me angry because they think that my job is only about typewriting but they are totally wrong. Nowadays it is crucial and at the same time difficult to be able to operate various office equipment, internet, fax, telephones, scanning, printing, photocopying and to co-ordinate all of these with contract dates, deadlines or events it is quite a challenge itself. Being competent with most Microsoft Office programs; MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access, or Power Point has a huge impact on my work and it is very needful today.

Interviewer: What kind of research do you conduct before you enter the court room?

Interviewee: Most of my research is education-related. I always try to find out most of useful facts such as background matters, what type of vocabulary will be used in this case, medical or technical details. I usually use my wide range of dictionaries, books and the internet of course. When the case is really difficult and I have doubts I simply contact people who might help and together we always try to find the best solution. Consultations with clients are very

important.

Interviewer: How do you cope in crisis situations, such as for example a client wants his translation order done on a day before scheduled date?

Interviewee: If the customer demands the translation order to be done in an extremely short period of time, in which I do not have any possibility to prepare myself or I have accepted other translation order to accomplish at the first place then I have a right to reject such an order. Basically, if such situations take place then I refer to “kodekstłumaczprzysięgłego” (a sworn translators code) z dn. 31.03.2005 TEPIS § 4. (Uzasadniona odmowa tłumaczenia). Such a refusal should be duly substantiated. However these are exceptional cases.

Interviewer: Can you make a living out of your wage?

Yes, you can make decent money out of this job, but unfortunately this business is not so easy.

Interviewer: What do you mean ‘not so easy’?

You see, while being a court translator you have to be aware that at this position, you are partly dependent on other people or institutions. Therefore you’re in a way on call a lot. It is like you have to be on a whistle. You also have to be conscious that there are certain law regulations, permitted or required by law or regulatory requirements (for instance, in response to a court order or a subpoena). Sometimes such a court order or imposed adjuration might be really an unpleasant case for example body remains identification.

Many times I have had a phone call from a Police on Sunday at 12:00 a.m. to the cases such as scratched cars. Once a person with German citizenship hit the car while being drunk when he tried to leave the car park. I also remember one accident in which the cyclist during a cycling race hit the woman on a side of the road. I had to take a part in questioning of a woman suspect and later on convicted for committing a murder. I cooperated in jail for women with the attendance of a prosecutor from Germany. I had a nervous and hard conversation with an aggressive Dane who almost crushed my leg while slamming the door. I had to be present and fill my duties in a case between father and son because the father had restraining order from judge. After what I’ve been through, I gained knowledge and experience and now I know that I’m strong confident person who believes in her own abilities, worth and who respects herself.

Interviewer: What would you advise a person who wants to become an interpreter?

Interviewee: If someone is interested in becoming a court interpreter she or he has to be aware of the fact that a court interpreter is meant to play a key role in the trial courts by interpreting for defendants, litigants or witnesses. Moreover, helping to insure access to justice for thousands of citizen with limited German, English or any other language is something very honourable, highly admirable and professional. According to the research conducted by Prof. Dr. Ingrid Kurz from the University of Vienna, who is one of the most prominent researchers in the field of interpreting, the court translator is one of the most stressful occupations in the whole world. She wrote that this profession is very demanding one and it requires a maximum of attention and concentration. Ingrid Kurz has mentioned about incredible brain activity, concentration and its influence during simultaneous speaking and listening. What is interesting she studied sociology and interpreting at the same time. At the moment she is retired and still teaches simultaneous classes. Her survey presented this profession on the second place right after an air traffic controller. At the same time it is worth mentioning that the court translator occupation is listed as the most prestigious occupation in the world. I have

no doubts that many people can agree with me that philology studies are not easy one and they definitely require regular hard work, organization and self-devotion. Nevertheless, in return this pursuit offer comprehensive knowledge. This job is hard and it gratifies with satisfaction but at the same time also requires constantly tracking ongoing inevitable changes in the language and enriching skills.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time

Interviewee: You're welcome.

<http://www.abacustranslations.com/2014/01/interview-with-prof-dr-ingrid-kurz.html>

<http://etabeta.univ.trieste.it/dspace/bitstream/10077/2472/1/03.pdf>