

A translator's CV – a translator's best friend – Part III

by

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Abstract:

Education: formal, informal, specific, non-specific

Comment

Author

Part III: Education

It is a trend of modern life to regard education as what is given to you in a classroom. We ask “where did you go to school?” as if the school or classroom were the only source and fountain of education. The word itself from the Latin, *educere*, meaning ‘to lead out /to march forward/to raise up’ amongst a multitude of other meanings, says nothing about giving classes or courses, but rather speaks of leadership and cultivation.

Informal

Long before Education Acts, a pupil might have been educated privately or by a family member at home or which some neighbours’ children or with a tutor, to ensure a total rounding off of the person. It is interesting to note that in old Ireland under Breton laws, the sons of chiefs were always sent away from the family to a trusted friend to be educated in how to grow up, and not so such as to be schooled in the 3 R’s of “reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic”.

Education has less to do with reading such and such a subject at university and more to do with the rounded grasp of culture and civilisation, which nowadays tends to have a clear technological and electronic bias.

Within these parameters, the translator more than many another professional must show him/herself to be a balanced, cultured, knowledgeable person with a wide variety of interests.

This is not to say that a translator of a very narrowly focussed field is not to be regarded as a good translator, but we are rather trying to say that a translator will be exposed during his/her professional career to variety.

Formal

It is quite amazing the number of established translators who do not list their formal education which should be a statement of primary, secondary and/or third level achievement. Every modern nation has its own grip on the division of formal education. Don't leave it out. Do put it in your CV/résumé.

Primary

By primary education, we mean that formal national or state education given from around five to twelve years of age. In most countries in this day and age, primary education is obligatory. On a CV-résumé, it is merely sufficient to indicate the years, school and location, and there is no need to state anything about this primary education itself e.g.

1977-1984 National school, Little Town, Big Country
Primary certificate

It is to be noted that some countries because of the compulsory nature of primary education, no longer give any sort of certificate, which is unfortunate as the person then has no public record of either attendance or achievement.

Secondary

Secondary education may be called comprehensive, Lycée, lyceum, gymnasium, classical, technical, state, high school or simply secondary depending on your country of birth and it will normally run from twelve to seventeen years at the upper end of the cycle. It is useful to indicate briefly if this is a single cycle or a double one, e.g.

1985-1987 Middle School, Little Town, Big Country
Junior certificate [Biology, English, History, Geography,
Maths, French]

1988-1989 Town High School, Bigger Town, Big Country
High School diploma [English, Maths, Chemistry, Physics,
French]

There is little point in indicating marks/grades for these levels but merely to indicate the type or nature of subject taken.

Many a person fails to give his/her secondary education because it may not have been the “classical” or “high school” type of education, or simply because they feel that it not “important” enough. Technical or vocational education at secondary level can be just as important for the translator whose educational ‘experience’ has frequently to come from outside the box.

Third level

It is a mistake to think of third-level education as purely that to be found at a university. At the end of a normal three-, four- or, in some countries, of a five-year course, the undergraduate student ends up with what is called a primary degree such as a *Baccalaureum Artis* (B.A.) or *Baccalaureum Scientiae* (B. Sc.). In some countries, the words [and consequently the initials are reversed].

There are many truly excellent institutions of third level education which are not universities in the old sense of the word, for example, professional colleges, polytechnics, institutes of technology, regional technical colleges, etc., where the level of education is for all intents and purposes equal to if not better in their specific subject areas than at a university, and particularly from the practical training aspect.

It does no harm either to remember the words of the wag who said “I never let university interfere with my education”.

In a survey conducted earlier in 2005 where the CVs of some three thousand plus translators were analysed, eighty per cent of the translators possessed a primary third-level degree of some sort or in some subject(s).

However, many persons now find it possible and suitable to read for a Master’s or for a Doctorate in their chosen field. In the same survey referred to above, some 26% of translators held a Master’s degree and some 15% had doctorates.

It is interesting to note that from among the excess of four hundred holding doctorates, only a handful had a doctorate in ‘true’ translator or interpreting studies, whereas the vast majority held a doctorate in fields as disparate as law, chemistry, business management, medicine, etc. This level of heterogeneity in the translator community assures clients at large of a level of prior experience unparalleled in other professional fields.

Awards

The translator should state also in a CV any award, prize, bursary or scholarship given. The same may have little reference to a translation in hand, but it is an extra display to the client of competence and achievement.

Specific skills

There are two levels of specific education. The first normally refers to courses taken to carry out a specific profession, e.g. those of a lawyer. The second refers to courses which are specific to you and to your interests, whether those interests are work-related or not.

A translator should list all translation-related courses taken, e.g. MS XP Professional (3 weeks), Advanced Excel (5 weeks), Technical German for Mechanic and Electricians (2 weeks), etc. You get the idea.

Other courses, might be less interesting to a client, e.g. Speed-reading (2 weeks), Advanced Speed touch-typing (1 week), Bee-keeping and hive health (Autumn 2004), etc.

Such courses might not help your skills as a translator, but will show the client, albeit fleetingly, that you have more interests than the grammar and syntax of your chosen languages.

May you have every enjoyment in creating or re-editing your CV/résumé!

Comments

Agreement or disagreement with any of the above, can be registered by sending an eMail to comments@infomarex.com which the author of this article will attempt to sort, compile and answer in the next article on the topic.

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