

## The Difficulty of Being a Freelance

My first real job of interpreter. I've never thought that it could be so overwhelmingly difficult!  
Still I'm ~~so~~ happy that I found it; ~~that~~ I just need to put on paper all nuances of it. ~~So~~ I was a  
freelance – the modern word which has come to our language from I dunno where to describe all  
~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> kind of part-time jobs one performs when there is such a need and the time limits of it exactly  
settled in the contract.

I said "part-time" but it is not always like that. ~~Though~~ <sup>he/she</sup> your employer tells you that it will take  
only two or three hours a day, ~~he (she)~~ <sup>he/she</sup> actually has a right to call you whenever it is necessary  
and when ~~he (she)~~ <sup>he/she</sup> desires. My boss <sup>^</sup> a man of about 50 (so I won't write "he (she)" anymore) <sup>^</sup>  
~~^~~ was very loyal to me and called me only in cases of urgency, ~~but~~ <sup>^</sup> still he could do it whenever  
it came to his head, without paying attention to my personal plans. That is the dark side of being  
a freelance: you become absolutely unpredictable <sup>because</sup> ~~soz~~ nothing depends on you; you just listen to  
the Boss Almighty and do what he asks.

Your contract does not presuppose that you will have weekends <sup>off</sup> just like other people do, <sup>not is it</sup> ~~or it is~~  
absolutely impossible to have a day off when you need it badly, <sup>^</sup> ~~nothing of that kind~~. And  
because they hired you to do some urgent job, you are supposed to do it – no matter <sup>if</sup> ~~then~~ it is  
Saturday ~~today~~ and 7 p.m. ~~already~~. So, if you run the risk of being a freelance, be prepared to  
have no ~~free~~ <sup>on</sup> time ~~and~~ weekends.

If social security is what matters to you, don't even ~~ever~~ think of being a freelance. ~~Or~~ <sup>^</sup> you can  
be one, <sup>but</sup> if you have another job except being a freelance. I didn't have any and social security  
wasn't of great importance to me, so I ~~rush~~ <sup>rushed</sup> to freelancing and tried to do the best of it. ~~Closing~~  
~~my eyes to absence of social security~~. In fact, <sup>legally,</sup> ~~legally~~ you can not have any medical insurance <sup>^</sup> if

you work as a freelance, nothing goes to your personal pension fund and, ~~which is~~ more important, you will not be able to prove that all this time of being a freelance, you were employed. Legally <sup>your</sup> status will still be that of unemployed. ~~And I wonder how you are going~~ to prove, say, at an interview with your future new employer, that you have <sup>any</sup> experience, if all this time you freelanced is mentioned no where. Of course, you can ask for the letter of recommendation but the percentage of employers who believe in what is written there is a paucity. Most just don't care. They need something more proving or they'll consider you a bit wet behind the ears.

~~But~~ still you can really enjoy the fact of being a freelance, just like I did. Because once you become a freelance, you get rid of everything <sup>that</sup> is connected <sup>to</sup> with a scheduled working life; ~~when you are to get~~ up at the same time, <sup>getting</sup> ~~have~~ a lunch break at exactly the same time and <sup>having</sup> ~~arrive~~ home at a more exactly the same time. If you are a freelance, <sup>your</sup> schedule can vary and that's what is great. You manage to escape the monotony of working life, every day brings something unexpected, and you certainly don't know at what time your work day will start and finish. ~~And I think it is fascinating when you are young and can't stand the idea of working all day long in a stuffy office.~~

The place of <sup>your</sup> work is also unsettled. Being a freelance interpreter makes you travel <sup>around</sup> ~~around~~ the city, the country, <sup>and</sup> the world. You are supposed to accompany <sup>your</sup> boss to all <sup>kind</sup> of conferences, business meeting<sup>s</sup> etc. And if he works with some foreign organization <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ happens rather frequent, you will be their personal tourist guide, because they will want to see the all local places of interests and travel to the surrounding places. And if you're luck to freelance near the lake Baikal (!!!) you'll have all possible kinds of excursion together with foreign guests, no matter that a good half of time you'll translate for them.

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### Mistrust to the interpreter

So, you decided to continue your freelance journey, despite the fact that your mind is telling you to run away. Then be ready to face one more difficulty, ~~which is even harder to put up with, for it affects your professional skill. And it does it in a bad way.~~

Unfortunately, people are going to take your translations/interpretations with a pinch of salt. The situation gets worse if they know a bit of the foreign language you are working with.

I happened to work at a Technical University, <sup>translating</sup> ~~I translated~~ for German students, my translations being purely devoted to architecture and design. For them, as well as for our Russian students and teachers, the English language was foreign. My employers wanted me to use the vocabulary (of architecture and design) <sup>^</sup> which they worked out themselves <sup>^</sup> not being native speakers of English. They learned the language as well as I did; the only difference was that I devoted my whole life to learning, translating and practising, <sup>while</sup> they ~~had~~ just grabbed some phrases of How-do-you-do meaning and thought ~~they are professionals.~~

~~do-you-do~~

The problems appeared when I tried to give up this vocabulary, <sup>which wasn't</sup> ~~not~~ comprehensive at all because it included words like "dwelling neighbourhood", "reservoir", "burg", etc. Shortly, all the words <sup>had</sup> ~~might~~ have an architecture meaning but only in a special context.

German's.

I tried to make my interpretation comprehensive for the ~~German~~ <sup>foreign</sup> speakers. I knew it well they were not ~~foreign~~ <sup>foreign</sup> speakers. Moreover, I was ~~extremely~~ <sup>extremely</sup> pressed for time, ~~but~~ <sup>because</sup> I translated simultaneously, and sometimes ~~you~~ <sup>I</sup> just ~~don't~~ <sup>didn't</sup> have time to recall all those highly special context words. The main idea – in my opinion – is to transfer the meaning. The question of how to do it is always to the discretion of the translator.

But my employers wanted me to produce a word-for-word translation using their vocabulary even if there were no need in it: I found easy words and phrases to explain what was told, the German got the meaning alright without technical vocabulary. ~~But~~ <sup>my boss</sup>, who knew a bit of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> language, got very disappointed every time he didn't manage to hear his vocabulary.

The same thing happened every time I did written translations. His secretary, ~~alongside~~ <sup>alongside</sup> with him, ~~checking~~ <sup>ed</sup> my version of a text with the original one, tried to find an every-word coincidence, which was impossible in the sense translation. That was what a translator ought to do: to render the sense not every word printed. Certainly, it was a kind of a problem for me to perceive the sense of the sentence like the following: “Интернациональный контекст и свобода от местной зашоренности, от политической конъюнктуры в проектных решениях и в оценке развития территории позволяют экспертам формировать актуальное и градостроительное знание в отношении конкурсных площадок, объективно оценивать ситуацию и перспективы ее развития.” but I think I did it right when I gave the following interpretation: “The experts have an opportunity to estimate ideas of participants and a real town-planning situation independently from political, regional and other contexts.” And it is my strong believe that a native speaker, ~~to~~ <sup>whom</sup> ~~who~~ this text was supposed to be addressed, would easily understand the meaning. Even if I didn't translated the word «зашоренность» as they highly advised me.

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or explain  
is more? →

## Word-for-word

The translation of technical material should be word-for-word when you deal with manuals or other instructions <sup>Nevermind</sup> when one wrong word can lead to some dangerous consequences, but sometimes it is a matter of translator's reputation to make it sound more English, more understandable from the point of view of a native speaker. Moreover, I never dealt with manuals and instructions. My job was to render the fluent communication.

### Cultural Aspect or Why the Russians drink so much

Coming to <sup>Russia,</sup> ~~Russi,~~ a foreigner keeps in mind some cultural factors about the country. Some of them concerns bears walking right in the streets, ~~the~~ terrible unsupportable frosts and of course vodka. For the most cases those factors are mere stereotypes.

Being an interpreter and working with foreigners and natives at the same time makes it rather clear, ~~and you have no doubt about that.~~ The myths are refuted: bears live in forests even in such a wild country as Russia; the frosts are quite alright if you put proper <sup>clothes;</sup> ~~clothes~~ and <sup>which is</sup> ~~which is~~ more important of all, for it changes the image of a typical Russian, the Russians drink only to show off.

To begin with, there was always common opinion that there are the <sup>least</sup> ~~lot~~ amount of teetotlers <sup>?</sup> among the Russians. Who, how and why formed this opinion, I've no idea. And I won't say ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> "Thankee, sir" if I meet ~~he~~ <sup>him</sup> on the street.

Probably, it is partially true. You'll never see a drunk in Thailand, for example, or in France.

But I am not gonna support their way of life, for in Thailand it is forbidden to drink at all,

religion and all, moreover the watchful eye of the King Almighty doesn't let them drink too

much. As far as France is concerned, they have their scale of measurement. It is OK to drink wine

while having dinner, lunch and supper, and they won't fine you if you are caught driving a bit

intoxicated. You can explain by saying that you've just had dinner (lunch or supper) and they'll

let you go.

Saying that the Russians drink is partially true because sometimes they do drink but they have

strong reasons for that. ~~The reasons are the following:~~ when foreigners come, the Russians want

to show them a piece of real Russia. And <sup>since</sup> ~~as far as~~ the image of it would not exist without

vodka, they take it everywhere and on every occasion.

When I worked and we had to go to the lake Baikal, it was -30C by the way, <sup>and</sup> our boss took so

many bottles of vodka, <sup>that</sup> I thought it would be enough to quench the thirst of a good

thousand of seals inhabiting the ~~lake~~ Lake. He said that it would help us not to be frozen. It was

really cold, but I don't think ~~actually~~ that the magical power of vodka could help much. But they

drank it and recommended the same to our guests, <sup>who</sup> of course were a bit confused by that; it

was 11 in the morning when we arrived there and these bizarre Russians are already blind drunk,

thought our guests. <sup>And</sup> what about the phrase a professor of the University used to utter while

we were there: "Drink, my dear, it will make your blood run faster and you won't feel any cold!"

What a... ph!! I guess the main thing <sup>here</sup> is that they <sup>believe</sup> ~~believe~~ themselves in the curing power of

the spirit, <sup>and</sup> it works, really, but only as a placebo.

Or how about night clubs <sup>daily</sup>? The German <sup>students</sup> happened to be in a very close contact

with the Russian students – they were to make a project together. And so they did. Only in day

This seems a little prejudice... and I don't think that's your intention

Be more specific

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time. Every night the Russians invented a new kind of torture for the <sup>German</sup>~~German~~, they either invited them to a bar or to a night club, or to another sort of entertaining activity. Certainly, students in Russia don't do that every day. But they tried to be very very hospitable. That's how night clubs <sup>were</sup>~~and all~~ are explained. In the end of their stay in Russia, the <sup>German</sup>~~German~~ were begging to leave them along just for a couple of days, just to contemplate other amenities of the Siberian city. A German girl complained to me that she would not be capable of studying in Russia because our students go to a night club every day, and drink, which they actually do not do, and if they did it <sup>it</sup> was only to show the true image of a Russian.

So, all these stereotypes –for they are pure stereotypes, <sup>not</sup> more – once created by someone, were substantially fixed in the minds of the Russians and they do their best to maintain this.