

T&I Spotlight

Mourine Breiner

Mourine Breiner is a self-employed French-English translator with 16 years of experience, specializing in international development, global health and corporate communications. She holds a master's degree in Translation, a bachelor's degree in bilingual studies and certificates in Computer Assisted Translation and Website Localization and Translation. Prior to becoming a full-time self-employed translator in 2017, she worked for the public and private sectors including the Department of State, the Swiss Cooperation for International Development and 2 private companies since 2004. She is owner of Beyond Words Solutions Inc. and a founding member of Beyond Words Solutions, Africa; a collective of linguists with expertise in content for Africa.

Q: Are you primarily a translator or an interpreter?

A: I am a translator. I usually tell people I am too slow a speaker to be an interpreter. I give interpreters a lot of credit. I took interpreting courses as part of my master's degree program, and occasionally offer consecutive remote interpreting but I choose to embrace my limits and fully explore my potential, my gift, my passion: translation.



Q: How did you decide to be a translator/interpreter, and how did you choose your language combination(s)?

A: Without sounding cocky, I truly believe I was born to become a translator. I started receiving compliments on my language skills at a very young age and I recognized that gift in middle school through distinct grades and fluency. That motivated me to major in bilingual studies in high school and I could tell from my passion for translation lessons that I wanted to be a translator. Pursuing a degree in bilingual studies in college was a natural step in that direction. Sitting for and passing the entrance exam into translation school brought this dream to reality. The translation program trained me in bidirectional translation.

Q: What do you consider to be your native tongue, and how did you learn your second language?

A: I grew up in a bilingual country (Cameroon) with French and English as official languages. I studied both languages from kindergarten to grad school. I have had native-level scores in both and am sometimes not sure how to answer this question, but I go with English. Apart from French and English, I speak Pidgin English, Mungaka and Mudimba with varying degrees of proficiency.

Q: Do you have a daily or weekly routine that helps you maintain a healthy work-life balance?

A: Definitely! It is hard for me to function in chaos! Having a routine schedule (even if I end up moving things around and changing priorities), help keep me sane. Apart from a virtual calendar and a planning software, my home office has 3 physical dry erase boards: a monthly planner, a weekly planner and a daily planner. On those, I plan and manage both professional and personal activities. I also use a timer to force me out of my chair at regular intervals.



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Q: What has been one of your favorite projects this past year?

A: It will not be an overstatement to say most of my projects are my favorites because I am very passionate about my specialty areas. I have had quite a few interesting projects since the beginning of the year, especially in one of my specialties; global health. Every single project I have worked on since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has left me gratified and honored to be contributing my quota to mitigating the spread of the virus and saving lives. The most recent was on combating coronavirus vaccine phobia.

Q: What advice would you give to a translator or interpreter who is just starting out?

A: For someone just starting out, I would assume they already possess the required skill set as a translator through some form of formal education or experience. This is important because being bilingual or multi-lingual does not automatically qualify you as a translator/interpreter. The importance of continuous education to stay abreast with evolving technology, concepts and skills, cannot be overemphasized. In addition, specializing and displaying mastery of one or a few domains definitely sets you apart. If you are a freelancer, it is important to build a financial safety net prior to engaging into full-time freelance translation. That prevents you from low-balling yourself for survival. You are better off spending time on marketing, continuous education and gradually proving your worth to clients who value and appreciate quality. Consistent quality and customized solutions have been the two driving forces behind my success as a translator and entrepreneur. Let your work keep the clients coming!

Q: In your experience, what are the most important qualities in a translator or interpreter?

A: Success as a translator is dependent on certain qualities. For the sake of concision, I would like to enumerate a few, in no special order.

- Organizational skills
- Attention to detail
- Reliability
- Punctuality
- Professionalism
- Multi-tasking
- Discipline

Q: If you could go back in time and choose a different career, what would it be?

A: That is a tough one! When I look back, all the puzzle pieces from my education to my professional life seamlessly result in translation. If I were forced to take a different route, I would be a counselor or a therapist. It is probably pure chance or coincidence but, I have been honored to be confided in a lot. Through empathetically listening to, providing a shoulder for, hope and reassurance to other people, I have learned quite a great deal, both in terms of informal counseling skills and the interconnection between the human state of mind, mindset and success/failure, outcomes etc.

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