

Interpreter/Translator ◀

BRIEFLY: Mariateresa crosses international borders with ease. As a professional interpreter fluent in five languages with a working knowledge of two others, she bridges the language barrier between nations and people. Although she grew up in the United States, she is equally at home abroad because she can converse with the natives.

Mariateresa Transforms Sounds Into Sense

Interprets the Nuances of Culture As Well as Language

“Interpreters are notorious show-offs!” Mariateresa gleefully admits. “Whenever another interpreter shows up at a meeting I’m attending, I know there’s going to be a competition to see who is best.” More often than not, Mariateresa’s “adversary” is the one left tongue-tied.



► Mariateresa checks a Spanish dictionary for the exact word to use in a translation.

Success has allowed Mariateresa, who lives in Orlando, Fla., to strike out on her own as a freelance interpreter translator after working for more than a decade for employers in both the United States and Europe. Today, she interprets in Spanish and Italian for the courts and in Span-

ish, Italian, French, and Portuguese for international commercial clients. She translates written materials in all four languages. She also conducts cross-cultural training for companies entering overseas markets and does online research in the four languages.

“You can’t be shy if you want to interpret,” Mariateresa asserts. “From the beginning, I’ve always been curious and outgoing. I’ve sought out opportunities to speak the languages I do. I keep learning.

“In our home,” she says, “Italian, Spanish, French, and German were spoken, so I learned English in school. Every summer we went to Italy. When we children got older, we traveled by ourselves throughout Europe. I discovered I loved serving as a ‘bridge,’ helping people of different languages and cultures to understand each other.”

Mariateresa pursued her love of language at college, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in romance languages. “Unfortunately,” she notes, “as wide-ranging as my education was, it was classical in the sense that it did not provide me with commercially marketable skills. The university I attended did not offer special courses in interpretation or commercial translation. I had to invent my own techniques. So I did a lot of technical research and experimented with different public-speaking techniques. One or two classes targeting those skills would have allowed me to jump start my career sooner.”

While she was still in school, she realized she needed practical experience, so she volunteered her language skills to a local electronic export

FOR THE RECORD



Mariateresa
**Free-lance Interpreter/
Translator**
Florida

EDUCATION

- Graduate of Freeport High School, Freeport, N.Y. Favorite subjects—French, Spanish, and history. Was a bilingual peer tutor and helped in English as a Second Language program. Member of *It's Academic* team, which appeared on television.
- Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y. Bachelor's degree in romance languages. President of the Spanish society. Member of the French club. Cofounded, wrote for, and edited a Spanish poetry magazine. *"My literature and foreign history courses helped me develop a solid background in each language and the culture in which it is spoken. To speak a language fluently is not enough. You must know idiom—common phrases, clichés, etc.—which derives from a country's historical experience and provides a common bond among its citizens."*

WORK HISTORY

- From trainee to general manager's assistant, electronic export firm, New York, four years. Interpreted for European clients.
- Staff translator interpreter, Citicorp Services, Inc., New York City. Had to translate 42 pages of financial and legal documents per day into Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, and Dutch.
- Assistant to president, Kem Manufacturing Corporation, Rome, Italy, two years. Served as a liaison between U.S. and European offices of chemical products firm. Managed office, did technical translations, and planned conferences.
- Project administrative assistant, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Rome, four years. Managed office and did translations and interpretations for a technology project sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Free-lance language consultant, first in Rome, then New York City, three years. Interpreted and translated for multinational companies, private parties, courts, and law offices. Offered cross-cultural training and travel planning to executives posted abroad.

JOB BENEFITS

- None—self-employed. *"I enjoy home-based work and frequent opportunities for travel. Flexibility in my working hours also allows me to pursue personal interests, such as creative writing and personal travel."*

firm. "I wanted an environment that provided me with the technical commercial terminology I lacked," she explains. "They ended up hiring me although I couldn't even type, and I worked there all four years of college."

After college, Mariateresa became a corporate translator and interpreter in New York City; then moved to Rome as a liaison between a chemical products firm's United States and European offices. Then, she joined the Rome staff of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Three years later, she decided to become a free-lance interpreter. "After 12 years of working hard for my employers, I decided I'd rather work hard for myself," she recalls. "I used a network of past clients and referrals to begin."

In short order, Mariateresa was translating for the Italian subsidiary of a U.S. telecommunications firm; translating computer-software user manuals; consulting with civil engineering firms; and translating articles and texts for a European Economic Community magazine published in Italy.

She returned to the United States. Courts, law offices, and international firms in New York City used her services, and, later, Alenco International Inc. contracted with her to provide English Spanish technical translations and be their liaison with South American clients.

Glassed In

She relocated to Orlando, Fla., and began offering interpretation and translation services to courts and firms in that area.

"As an interpreter, I find myself working in all kinds of offices, factories, and other places conceivable for a business meeting, including in moving taxis, during a walk down the street, and in some very chic restaurants. For conferences, I often work in a glass booth or stand offstage.

"There are two different interpreting methods available for such events as conferences—simultaneous and consecutive," she points out.

"Simultaneous is more popular, because it saves time. This is a specialized skill, since I have to listen, understand, and translate within seconds while a speaker is still speaking. Usually, I'm briefed preceding the session to familiarize myself with the subject matter. For simultaneous interpreting, I work in a glass

booth, use an electronic audio system to listen to the speaker, and rebroadcast my translations via microphone to the participants.

“Consecutive interpreting is the more traditional method used in a question-and-answer or conversational format,” she continues. “I listen, mentally translating until the speaker finishes. Then I translate aloud.”

When Mariateresa translates written text, she works at home in her combination home office bedroom. “There I have a desk, chair, computer, fax, phone, and modem. I also have bookshelves filled with technical dictionaries, glossaries, and written research materials to help me find that elusive term quickly when I need it.”

Who Lost the Cargo?

Yesterday, under contract to a local law firm, she spent the entire day interpreting in court. The previous evening she had reviewed stacks of legal materials about the case so she would be prepared for the issues and terminology.

Dressed in comfortable business attire, Mariateresa arrived at the courthouse at 8 a.m. to participate in a case involving loss of valuable cargo at sea. Specifically, she interpreted for two Spanish-speaking men who had lashed the cargo onto the boat. Eighteen lawyers were involved in questioning them during their examination.

“It was a circus!” she exclaims. “Fortunately, after nearly 11 hours of continuous interpreting, I did not suffer from an interpreter’s worst nightmare—laryngitis!”

Other assignments are not as grueling. Recently, Mariateresa accepted a job with an Italian businessperson who does not speak English. The man owns several residential and commercial properties in Miami and was looking for others to purchase. For a week, she accompanied him wherever he needed to go. She interpreted for him when he spoke with managers of properties, bank officials, and lawyers. “We went to a lot of ritzy places, including the Keys,” she notes. All of her expenses were paid, including her room in a luxurious hotel each night.

Recently, Mariateresa translated English business manuals into Italian for an American engineering firm that was constructing a factory

in Italy. She started her day at 6 a.m. with coffee and a short walk. “Translating is sedentary work, so I *have* to get moving first,” she explains.

At 7, she sat down at her desk and read through the text to identify the technical glossary. “It’s critical that the vocabulary be consistent throughout,” she notes. “I don’t want to use different words at different points throughout the text for the same idea.”

Once she had established her glossary, Mariateresa reread the English text before her while typing the Italian translation into her computer as she read. After two solid hours of work, she took a break to run some personal errands.

Back home at 9:30, she called a couple of agencies and private clients to check on current and future job assignments. By 10, she was again translating text at her computer. She broke for lunch at noon.



► *Mariateresa, who grew up in a multilingual family, has a veritable United Nations package of language skills.*

Afterward, Mariateresa revised the work she had completed that morning, performed a spell check, and made sure accent marks were applied where needed. As a final check, she compared the two versions against each other. “I wanted to make certain that I didn’t leave anything out,” she explains.

She set aside the translation at 3 and spent the balance of the afternoon doing online research for other projects and reading for enjoyment.

Interpreter/Translator

At least once a year, Mariateresa, who is single, arranges for a group of friends, relatives, and friends of friends to travel around the United States, Europe, or South America with her. "I have also worked as a local tour guide in Rome, Florence, Venice, and New York City for brief periods of time," she says. "The main focus of my personal and professional lives is the same. I chose this field because I'm interested in languages, history, and culture. There's always more to learn. I never get bored!"

"In the years ahead," she continues, "I would like to travel even more, spending my summers

in Europe and more time in South America, two continents I'm very at home in."

Mariateresa sees increasing opportunities for interpreters and translators. "With the rise of international trade and the ease with which global telecommunications facilitate companies' entry into new markets abroad, demand for our services will only grow," she asserts. "Americans generally lack foreign language and cultural communications skills, too. This guarantees that interpreters, especially those with technical and business experience, will find clients eager to acquire their services."

DATA FILE

Interpreter/Translator

D.O.T.:137.267-010 O*NET:27-3091.00 HC:ESA

WORK DESCRIPTION

Translates words spoken in one language into another—listens to statements made in one language; interprets them in a second language; translates responses back in the first language; interprets statements as they are being spoken and broadcasts translations to listeners. Translates text from one language into another—reads material; rewrites in another language, following appropriate syntax, grammar, and sentence structure; edits and revises.

WORKING CONDITIONS

In offices, convention halls, courtrooms, and other business meeting sites. In office translating written texts. May sit in glass booth, listen to spoken words on electronic audio system, and broadcast translations to listeners. May travel frequently. May experience stress from demands for on-the-spot accuracy.

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment; international organizations and corporations; federal and state courts and agencies; United Nations; publishing companies; travel agencies.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Language aptitude; verbal ability; strong larynx; accuracy; detail-mindedness; ability to deal with a variety of people; patience; maturity; initiative; flexibility; dependability; open-mindedness; curiosity; stamina.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Bachelor's degree in foreign language minimum.

JOB OUTLOOK

BRIGHT!

Much faster than average growth (11% or higher) as global communications and trade increase.

SALARY RANGE

U.S. median wage

\$23.61 per hour, \$49,110 per year, depending on type of material being translated, experience, employer, and location.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Bilingual Secretary; Braille Transcriber; Interpreter for the Deaf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The subject of this biography is not available to answer personal inquiries. For more information addresses are current as of publication date.

American Translators Association

<http://www.atanet.org/>

National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)

<https://najit.org/>

Business Professionals of America

<http://www.bpa.org/>

American Business Women's Association

<http://www.abwa.org/>

To find information about similar careers, see *Voc-Bio's Pathways* or *Cluster* search, an encyclopedia, or books on careers found in your library, career center, or counseling or placement office. Check computer listings. Look up the following words:

Bilingual, Communication, Cross-cultural, Interpreter, Foreign Language, Language, Multicultural, Translator. Also see the Business and Office, Communications and Media, Fine Arts and Humanities, Personal Service, and Public Service Careers clusters.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Talk to interpreters and translators about what they do. Get a part-time job that exposes you to a second language. Learn at least one foreign language and practice both speaking and writing it. Read a foreign language newspaper or magazine, watch television shows in a different language, and attend foreign films. Host an international student at your home and/or travel abroad to study in another country. Attend multicultural events in your community and study about cultures other than your own. Take courses in English, foreign languages, speech, composition, history, geography, art appreciation, music appreciation, social studies, and psychology.

LIFESTYLE IMPLICATIONS

Interpreters may travel both locally and abroad and may work evenings and weekends to accommodate clients. These factors may affect family and social life.

Persons are portrayed herein without regard to race, sex, or religious background. Careers discussed are to be considered acceptable for either sex. **Bright outlook careers are expected to grow rapidly in the next few years or are new and emerging occupations.**

Interpreter/Translator. "Mariateresa Transforms Sounds Into Sense." *VocBio* - Vocational Biographies. Web.