

Professional Prospects for Translation / Interpreting Graduates in the Algerian Market

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ABSTRACT: *Since independence, the Algerian University was among the first universities to propose for students a translation and interpreting degree within the Institute of Translation. Over the years, the Institute has evolved to offer, in addition to the bachelor's degree, a master's and PhD degrees in translation. Once graduated, it is evident that students will try to immerse themselves in a wide-ranging job market. In this regard, we will seek in this article to give an overview of the potential professional opportunities available to students who have recently graduated in the aforesaid discipline, in an Algerian context characterized by the presence on the labor market of salaried translators, official translators, and freelance translators -also called freelancers.*

KEYWORDS: Translator / Interpreter, Job opportunities, Labor market, Salaried, Freelancer.

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Introduction

Due to its colonial legacy, Algeria is still facing a real bilingualism with French and Arabic being the two main languages. Accordingly, training translators and, a fortiori, teaching translation have become essential.

To this end, the Algiers' Institute of Translation was created in 1962 under the name of "l'Ecole Supérieure de Traduction" (High School of Translation), which was restructured several times. Later, the School became "Département de Traduction" (Department of Translation) under the Institute of Foreign Languages, then "Institut de Traduction" (Institute of Translation) and once again "Département de Traduction", within the Faculty of Arts and Languages of the Algiers University. Subsequently, the Department once again became "Institut de Traduction" under Algiers 2 University, split into two (02) departments: the Department of Latin Languages and the Department of Germanic and Oriental Languages.

Under the LMD reform, the Institute of Translation currently offers a five (05) year training program (bachelor's and master's degrees), divided into the following language combinations: Arabic-French-English, Arabic-French-Spanish and Arabic-French-German. Referred to as MCIL¹, this program integrates two (02) degrees under one (01) academic curriculum, where admissions' process to master's course is abrogated and students pass directly from bachelors' to masters' course. Besides, the Institute proposes since 2015/2016 academic year a PhD degree for master's holders.

It should be noted that translation training has been officially regained in September 2016 for undergraduates. The program offered, back then, a master's degree only for former translation and foreign languages' graduates, according to the following bilingual combinations: Arabic-French-Arabic (2013/2014), Arabic-English-Arabic (2013/2014), Arabic-Spanish-Arabic (2013/2014), Arabic-German-Arabic (2013/2014), Arabic-Russian-Arabic (2016/2017) and Arabic-Turkish-Arabic (2017/2018).

In the perspective to spread the culture of entrepreneurship and projects management, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has promulgated in 2022 the ministerial order n° 1275² carrying the procedures under which the new "degree + startup certificate – invention patent" are issued. As a result, we have seen intriguing and innovative ideas presented in various graduation projects.

In 2023/2024 academic year³, the Institute introduced "specialties" in master's degree courses in compliance with a range of ministerial orders⁴. The program puts forward seven (7) different options, and they

¹ MCIL stands for Master à Cursus Intégré Licence.

² Arrêté n° 1275 du 27 septembre 2022 fixant les modalités de préparation d'un projet de mémoire de fin d'étude, en vue de l'obtention d'un diplôme universitaire – startup par les étudiants des établissements supérieurs.

³ The class of 2023/2024 is the first masters' class ever to integrate the new program, after being as well the first class to initiate bachelors' new program within the MCIL degree course.

⁴ - Arrêté n° 1116 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE.

- Arrêté n° 1117 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « traduction audiovisuelle ».

- Arrêté n° 1118 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « traduction scientifique et technique ».

- Arrêté n° 1119 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « traduction institutionnelle ».

- Arrêté n° 1120 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « traduction des lettres et des arts ».

are audio-visual translation, scientific and technical translation, institutional translation, letters and art translation, communal translation, simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting, each with different modules and adapted content to the sector of professionalization.

Following this brief insight into the current landscape within the Institute of Translation, we will attempt through a descriptive and analytical approach to give an inclusive wide-ranging overview of translation job market, so as to facilitate students' comprehension to the status-quo of translation/interpreting job market in Algeria. In this sense, we have divided the professional aspect into three (3) categories of translators/interpreters: salaried, official and freelancers, alongside with other potential professional prospects.

I. Salaried translators/interpreters

Under the Statute of Public Function, the job is entitled translator-interpreter, which means the role entails translation as well as interpreting tasks, notwithstanding the degree's specialty, previous experiences, or personal preferences.

The Directorate-General of Public Function encapsulates under the executive decrees n° 08-04 and n° 16-280 the profession of translator-interpreter in four (4) ranks, namely:

- ❖ Translator-interpreter for bachelors' degree;
- ❖ Principal translator-interpreter for magister holders (predecessor of current masters' degree);
- ❖ Translator-interpreter in chief for PhD holders;
- ❖ Specialized translator-interpreter for masters' (recently added).

The promotion to higher ranks necessitates a defined number of years of experience plus a professional examination or in some cases a larger experience only (+10 years), with the exception of higher positions where the promotion is based on recommendation.

As for the recruitment methods, they include competitive examination, contracting and subcontracting, as detailed below:

•**Competitive examination:** encompasses two (02) modes of recruitment, that is: experience-based and spoken-written exams. The first mode requires the sufficiency of a scale of predicated criteria such as experience, age, marital status, seniority of diploma, place of residence ...etc. followed by a psycho-technical test (i.e. an interview), and as a final step, applications screening and selection process take place based on a ranking system. The second mode requires the sufficiency of conformity criteria with the job title. In other words, a degree in translation/interpreting is a prerequisite to apply for translator/interpreter job, besides other regulatory prerequisites like age and place of residence for example.

- Arrêté n°1121 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « traduction communautaire ».

- Arrêté n°1122 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « interprétation simultanée ».

- Arrêté n°1123 du 13 décembre 2022 fixant le programme des enseignements en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de licence en LLE, filière traduction, spécialité « interprétation consécutive ».

It is worth mentioning that the State recognizes the above-mentioned method as the only procedure for accessing public function as tenured translator/interpreter.

• **Contracting:** or contractualization is a mode of recruiting that requires generally no competitions. It consists of faster and simpler steps than the previous method, where there is usually an offer announcement, sifting applications, an interview, and then the results screening follows as a final step. Furthermore, as indicates the article 22 in the General Statute of Public Function, contracting entails two (02) types of contracts: fixed-term contract and open-ended contract. That being said, the vacant positions of the contractual employees do not endow them with the quality of a public servant, nor with the right to integrate public function bodies as such, according to the aforementioned article.

Other than public services, we find that private institutions operate primarily with this mode, for the reasons of flexibility and rapidity as indicate the various recruitment announcements, posted on different hiring platforms such as the National Employment Agency, Emploitic, Emploinet...etc. In such job offers, submitting a resume is enough, but sometimes a recommendation letter could be required.

• **Subcontracting:** According to Cambridge online dictionary (n.d.), subcontracting is the act of paying an outside person or organization to do work that might normally be done within an organization. In other words, there is a client whose task needs to be done and a service provider who is capable of doing that task. Subcontracting is usually the method that rules the world on which freelancers live off, not only freelancers but also official translators-interpreters benefit from this method.

In State sector, organizational charts show that translators-interpreters usually affiliate to certain departments/offices, within centralized administrations and headquarters, specifically in departments of media and communication, cooperation and external relations, and cabinets of key-chiefs.

In some institutions, there could be an independent service of translation & interpreting as in the presidential palace, the parliament, national press agency...etc. In other institutions, translators-interpreters join as members in charge of different tasks close to their main roles.

Job search engine of the Directorate-General of Public Function indicates another position under the rubric of "territorial translator-interpreter", which is a position within the territorial administration that pertains to town halls, districts and provinces, and show a discrepancy with the previously one in emolument and nature of competence.

In rare occasions, some public institutions may solicit interpreting services only, meaning the job description could call for interpretation graduates only. However, corporates, nationals or multinationals, usually ask for interpreters who can equally practice translation, writing, proofreading and personal assistance.

II. Official translators-interpreters

Since independence, the Algerian State has endeavoured to regulate the profession of official translator-interpreter through a series of laws⁵ governing this civil service profession. It was not until 1995 that the

⁵ It includes the following legal texts :

- Décret n°63-309 du 22 août 1963 relatif à l'assistance des interprètes.

- Décret n°70-176 du 23 novembre 1970 modifiant l'article 10 du décret n°69-156 du 02 octobre 1969 portant statut particulier des interprètes.

profession of official translator-interpreter was liberalised⁶ in Algeria, moving from the civil service to the liberal professions (BENAOUDA, 2017, 131).

As a result, official translators-interpreters have acquired the status of public servants and, as such, are bound by professional secrecy and enjoy all the privileges granted to other officers of the court such as notaries, bailiffs and others.

In addition to interpreting at court hearings and other confidential conferences and meetings, the official translator-interpreter is responsible for the day-to-day running of his/her public office in order to deliver official and certified translations that shall be authentic until proven otherwise, as provided in article 7 of order n° 95-13.

In order to open a public office in compliance with article 8 of the above-mentioned order, the official translators-interpreters must, meet the following prerequisites:

- 1- To have the Algerian nationality;
- 2- To be at least twenty-five (25) years old;
- 3- To enjoy full civil and political rights and not have been convicted of any crime;
- 4- To be graduated from the Institute of Interpreting and Translation or an equivalent qualification;
- 5- To have an experience of at least five (5) years as a translator and/or interpreter;
- 6- Proof of professional residence within the scope of this regulation;
- 7- To pass a national competitive examination⁷ to become an official translator-interpreter.

Before taking up his/her duties, an official translator-interpreter shall take an oath before the court of his professional domicile. However, it should be noted that an official translator-interpreter might, for compelling reasons, work away from his/her place of residence for a specified period, upon the request of both public prosecutor and general attorneys.

As such, it is a common practice that an official translator-interpreter is often helped by one or many assistants at his/her public office. The graduates of the Institute of Translation have the possibility of working as assistant translator-interpreter in official translation offices, as a contract employee where he/she benefits from the status of translator-interpreter.

As far as the fees are concerned, the official translator-interpreter perceives them in payment for his/her services and they are determined according to the nature of the document translated and for each typed page of 30 lines and 18 to 25 syllables per line. The fees are set by article 16 of the executive decree n° 96-292 as follows:

⁶ Texts of laws governing the profession of official interpreter translator in Algeria:

- Ordonnance n°95-13 du 11 mars 1995 portant organisation de la profession de traducteur- interprète officiel.
- Décret exécutif n°95-436 du 18 décembre 1995 fixant les conditions d'accès, d'exercice et de discipline de la profession de traducteur- interprète officiel ainsi que les règles d'organisation et de fonctionnement des organes de la profession.
- Décret exécutif n°96-292 du 02 septembre 1996 organisant la comptabilité des traducteurs-interprètes officiels et fixant les conditions de rémunération de leurs services. - Arrêté du 07 février 1996 portant fixation du nombre et du siège des officiers publics de traducteurs-interprètes officiels.

⁷ The last national competitive examination was held in 2011.

Translations	
1- For standard translations	200 DA
2- Diplomas and school documents	200 DA
3- For technical translations	350 DA
4- For civil status documents	200 DA
5- Administrative documents	250 DA
6- For judgments or rulings	350 DA
7- For signatures on any documents	100 DA
8- For endorsements on payment orders or bills of exchange	100 DA
Interpretation	
9- For consecutive or simultaneous interpreting, lasting less than six (6) hours, including travel expenses, at conferences, seminars, symposia or other events	1600 DA
- For each additional hour	500 DA
10- Before a court of law, for spoken or written translation, during hearings, inquiries, expert appraisals or other investigative measures ordered by the court, as well as any other operation per one-hour session and per case:	350 DA
- First hour.....	400 DA
- Other hours.....	
Assistance and proofreading	
11- For assistance with all notary, public officer and registry acts, plus transportation costs.	300 DA
12- For the official revision of all translations other than those carried out by himself/herself.	50% (value of the initial translation)
Miscellaneous	
13- Other work or assignment relating to the profession of official translator-interpreter which is not mentioned above	fixed by the President of the court to which the official translator-interpreter is attached
14- A copy of a non-certified translation	a fixed fee equal to half the value of the 1 st translation shall be paid for each roll of writing of 30 lines per page and 18 to 25 syllables per line, including the first roll.

Table (01): Translation/Interpreting Pricing

It is noteworthy that today's pricings largely increased compared to those mentioned in the table above and applied only in dealing with judicial parties. By taking into consideration the fluctuation and the volatility of the economic status quo, nationally and internationally, today and during the past 27 years (since the promulgation of the executive decree n° 96-292), the higher authorities must initiate discussions aiming at reforming the profession and elevating the status of official translator-interpreter, together with social partners.

The «National Chamber of Official Translators and Interpreters» should seriously discuss this financial issue⁸. The said Chamber gathers all the official translators and interpreters throughout the national territory and is subdivided into three (03) regional chambers (East, West and Centre). According to the former Head of the National Chamber of Official Translators and Interpreters, the number of certified translators, up to February 2024, is estimated at 486, spread across the three (03) regional chambers as follows: Centre (278), East (139) and West (69). It should be pointed out that this is a census only, since some official translators, for one reason or another, are not actually practicing (immigration, death...etc.).

III. Freelancers

Freelancing refers to a type of work arrangement where individuals offer their services on a project basis to multiple clients. Freelancers work on short-term tasks facilitated by digital platforms and can be involved in various types of work, such as temporary work, work on-demand, and contract work, and they are often referred to as entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, or digital micro-entrepreneurs (Hudek & al., 2020, 56).

In this regard, translators/interpreters do not make the exception when it comes to freelancing. From a legal perspective, freelance translators/interpreters hold different legal status, so as to provide services to companies or individuals:

- **Self-employed translators:** To become a freelance translator, it is often advisable to set up a micro-business, given that it is straightforward and requires few administrative formalities. The other advantage of this status is that it is free to set up and very easy to account for. However, it also has its disadvantages: there is a turnover limit and your assets are not protected in the event of financial difficulties.

- **Single-member Company:** To become a freelance translator, you can also set up a single-member company, generally a Unipersonal Limited Company (EURLs). Unlike auto-entrepreneur status, there is no ceiling on annual turnover and your assets are protected from your business creditors. Additionally, this form of business establishes the translator's credibility with clients. However, the formalities involved in setting up EURLs are more complicated and costly, and the accounting is more demanding.

It is perfectly possible to become a freelance translator by setting up your own business, and then to expand as your turnover grows. You can also choose to set up your business as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC).

- **Salaries Portage company:** As with other freelance professions, Salaries Portage Company is a reassuring option. In return for a percentage of the turnover generated by the linguist, Salaries Portage Company invoices the client and pays the translator by issuing a formal pay slip.

The factors that influence the decision to use subcontractors in the translation market (SEKGWELEO & IYAMU, 2022, 217) include outsourcing of translation and translation-related services, large-scale outsourcing leading to quality uncertainty, information asymmetry, adverse selection, price pressure, and perceived commoditization. Other factors include the importance of each factor and the cause-effect relations between various types of factors, which can be analysed using the fuzzy DEMATEL method⁹.

⁸ The Chamber serves as the only official association recognized by the State, which have the right of representing the community of translators and interpreters when discussing the problems and the concerns of the field with the competent authorities.

⁹ The DEMATEL method evaluates supplier performance to find key-factor criteria to improve performance and provides a novel approach of decision-making information in supply chain management (SCM) supplier selection.

Freelance translators/interpreters could use the potential of social web technologies to boost their visibility in the market, to facilitate virtual collaboration, and to provide access to information and possible clients. For this purpose, multiple platforms exist worldwide to connect freelancers to potential clients, like Fiverr, Freelancer, Jooble...etc. In the Arab world, we find similar websites like Khamsat, Mostaqil ...etc.

In translation/interpreting field, it is common to find these platforms under the rubric of “translation portal” which serves according to Durand-Fleischer (2013, 92-93) as a bridge between a language service provider (LSP) and an outsourcer; i.e. the client, who offers the original document to be translated. Proz and Translators Café are considered one of the clearest examples that illustrate the concept of a language-based platform that connects clients, from different parts of the world, with translators/interpreters or other language experts, based on their specific language needs (DAOUD, 2022, 705).

The reliance on digital platforms defines the translation industry; therefore, technology-driven solutions are a cornerstone in meeting the demands of a globalized and interconnected world. Nonetheless, translation industry is a market based on social interaction and networking, which is fundamentally maintained by personal relationships (ABDALLAH & KOSKINEN, 2007, 684).

IV. Other Potential Professional Prospects

Due to the interdisciplinarity of translation and interpreting, the graduates have multiple professional prospects in different sectors, not as translators-interpreters but by exploiting their linguistic and extra-linguistic skills. The sectors with prospective employments are as follows:

- Media and communication: writers, editors, proof-readers, on-screen jobs, and content creators/managers on social media.
- Economy: business managers, copywriters and sales-clerks.
- Education: teaching (foreign languages or translation), researchers and academic reviewers.
- Tourism and travel: flight attendants, service staff and tour guide.
- Assistance jobs: secretaries, assistants...etc.

Likewise, embassies are considered one of the most sought-after destinations that translation novices aspire to reach. Generally, interpreting and translation are not the only tasks to complete in diplomatic institutions; events management, invitations, social media management, and tour guiding are included as well.

In Algeria, translation and interpreting graduates can join the Diplomatic Corps by passing an entry exam, as shown in the 2022 national competitive exam announced by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join the ranks of diplomatic attaché and secretary of foreign affairs.

On top of that, experienced translators/interpreters have the opportunity to embrace an international career by holding positions at the United Nations Organization (UNO), the European Union Commission (EUC), the African Union (AU), the Arab League and similar bodies, which are always in need for language professionals. As such, they play a key role in spreading information and preserving the institution’s memory.

V. Conclusion

In the light of the above-detailed translation professional landscape in Algeria, the study indicates that a wide range of job opportunities, in both state and private sectors, are accessible for translation and interpreting graduates. It is worth mentioning also that the national market has thrived significantly, in the last years, due to the growing foreign investments (BOUKHEMIS, 2012, 08) and, as such, translators and interpreters are necessary hired when dealing with foreigners speaking different foreign languages.

Considering that the market is not data-obedient nor predicted in most cases, the possible job vacancies likely to be occupied by translation/interpreting graduates may not be that accessible, or even unavailable in some cases. On this basis, we recommend the following:

- Up-dating the status regulating the official translator/interpreter profession, with the collaboration of experts in the field;
- Reviewing the national demand on translators/interpreters, especially after introducing English in several official institutions;
- Organizing workshops and meet-ups to educate students on professional prospects and hiring procedures;
- Pushing forward University openness to possible economic/institutional partners;
- Engaging with foreign companies, embassies and similar bodies to enrich translators/interpreters' employability.

These few propositions may lay the foundations for addressing the "brain drain" phenomenon, affecting the translation/interpreting field in Algeria. In the last few years, the country has been witnessing a loss in skillful workforce in all fields, translation/interpreting included. Several reasons lie behind this social-economic phenomenon, mainly the rigid spirit that rules over the market and the pessimistic attitude among some Algerian youth who, due to lack of vision and professional orientation, can easily leave everything behind them, sometimes even at the risk of their own lives.

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