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level of communicative competence in at least one foreign language, clearly the foundation must be laid more seriously at KS2-3 in terms of grammatical knowledge, confidence in speaking and, most importantly, cultural knowledge.

The new curriculum has the potential of reversing the reduction of subject content to 'phrase-book' language and diluted, if any, cultural content. There is a clear need to examine curriculum content in languages and the place of cultural knowledge and intercultural understanding across the whole languages curriculum, and to acknowledge the fundamental link between language and culture that is often ignored.

If foreign language learning is to be taken seriously, the government must make the necessary investment in supporting teachers to make the new curriculum work. It is not sufficient to leave them to their own devices. If that investment happens, it is, perhaps, not too optimistic to expect that future generations will see that knowledge of at least one foreign language is part of what it means to be educated.

In the next issue, new teacher Dominic Luddy shares his experiences of the PGCE, as the series on developments in primary and secondary education continues.

Notes

1 www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf

2 www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175439/NCR-Expert_Panel_Report.pdf

3 www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210969/NC_framework_document_-_FINAL.pdf

Scams: are you at risk?

Charis Fisher *uncovers a scam affecting up to a third of applications to some translation agencies*

Being proactive is a fundamental part of being a freelance translator. The only way to earn a substantial income is to be active in looking for jobs, and getting your CV out there and online is an inexpensive way to market yourself as a freelance translator. But beware. Many translators do not realise that it is precisely this action that exposes you to potential fraud. The way you advertise your language services on the internet, even on trustworthy sites, can put both your name and your reputation at risk.

As a student, I did an internship this summer at a London-based translation agency, and discovered that identity theft and scamming are more widespread than I could have imagined. One of my main tasks at UPS Translations was to sort through incoming CVs from translators we had never used before, and to accept or reject them as appropriate.

It struck me as odd that so many highly-qualified translators should commit such bizarre mistakes as misspelling their own names and making appalling grammatical errors in their covering letter emails. I was suspicious and began to do some research, and soon came across Proz.com's wiki page Translator Scam Reports.¹ As I scrolled down, I recognised many of the names of translators who had seemingly sent us their CVs. It became apparent that the CVs had been stolen from reputable freelancers and that the poorly written covering emails were

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fakes. Worryingly, at least a third of the emails we had received were fraudulent.

We quickly devised a system to recognise and block the scam emails and delete the hoaxers from our lists of potential linguists, but the fact that we could have fallen victim to one of these scams, wasting company time and money, is a scary thought.

How does the scam work?

- 1 The fraudsters steal the CVs of experienced translators from popular freelance sites, such as TranslatorsCafe.com and Proz.com, by downloading the file.
- 2 They change the email addresses on each CV to newly-created ghost accounts. Sometimes the name of the linguist is changed but often it is not, with serious implications for the reputation of the real translator.
- 3 The scammers impersonate the translators and send hundreds of covering letter emails

The scammers get paid the same rate as a highly-qualified translator for substandard work

from the ghost accounts, with the fake CVs attached, to request work from agencies and reply to job adverts.

- 4 If the recipient is fooled by the high quality of the CV and decides to offer the scammer an assignment, they complete the job using either machine translation, such as Google Translate, or an untrained and inexperienced translator, who may not be paid for the task.
- 5 As a consequence, the scammers get paid the same rate as a highly-qualified translator for substandard work. Sometimes they request advance payment so that they get their money upfront without having to touch the translation project.

Spotting the scam

There are five effective ways to detect this fraud:

- 1 **Free email addresses.** Hotmail and gmail are often used. Usually one email will be sent from several different email addresses – often one hotmail and one gmail. The gmail address protects its hotmail counterpart since it is impossible to find IP addresses from gmail accounts and discover the exact location of the hoaxer.
- 2 **The document author.** If the CV is sent in Word format the author of the document will be recorded when the file is saved. If this name does not correspond with the name of the supposed translator (sometimes it will even be written in Arabic script when the translator is European) then it is almost definitely a fake.
- 3 **Repetition and poor English.** In my experience, the fraudsters were never native English speakers and every email included

at least one example of bad grammar or substandard English. Be suspicious of anything that sounds stilted. Bizarre, repeated phrases are a favourite, such as 'I will be looking forward for a fruitful, hopefully long-term working relationship' and 'a translator's personal touch is what makes all the difference'.

- 4 **Bad formatting.** The notification 'extra line breaks were removed' often appears at the top of the email under the sender's email address and the message itself may be a mix of fonts or look untidy.
- 5 **Stress on payment.** The initial email may mention that payment methods include 'PayPal, Moneybookers and wire transfer'. PayPal in particular does not reveal where the payee is based, meaning that an agency could be unaware of the scam until after they had paid the fake translator.

Protecting yourself

Just as agencies need to protect themselves by being aware of these scams and creating their own anti-fraud systems, freelancers need to learn to protect themselves against the risk of identity theft. It is thanks mainly to Proz.com's Translator Scam Reports that I became aware of these hoaxes. It offers translators the option of reporting fake agencies, which are then displayed as fraudulent on the main site's Blue Board. However, it is concerning that this important service is included on their wiki page rather than their main website.

TranslatorsCafé,² another prominent freelance translation platform, has a forum called All About Garbage, where members can report scams. These can also be reported by sending a 'support request', which contacts the administrators directly. Screenshots can be included as evidence.

TL Charis Fisher is studying modern languages at the University of Bristol and recently gained work experience at UPS Translations.

An obvious step to guarding against becoming a victim of identity theft is to avoid posting your CV on an online platform and instead stating that it is available on request. Saving it as a pdf file is a sensible precaution to deter would-be scammers.

Another tip is to make sure that your professional email address does not resemble a scam email address, as this could lead to your application being rejected automatically by translation agencies. A typical hoax address might be `firstname.surname@gmail.com`. Avoid email providers such as hotmail and gmail for professional accounts, as this can make it difficult for clients to tell if the application is fake.

The only way for a potential client to verify that you are a real person is voice contact, so make yourself available by telephone so that your credentials can be verified easily. You still need to market yourself online, but these tips should help you to do so more securely.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.proz.com/about/translator-scam-alerts/>
- 2 www.translatorscafe.com/tcutils/support/

