

# What Does It Take to Work in the Translation Profession in Canada in the 21st Century? Exploring a Database of Job Advertisements

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Article abstract

This article contains an investigation into the translation profession in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The aim of this study is to investigate translation from the perspective of those who employ translators by analyzing a database of job advertisements for a variety of translation-related positions that were collected between January 2000 and December 2002. Spurred on by the effects of globalization, the language industry is in a period of change. Based on empirical evidence collected from the database, this article attempts to evaluate the current state of the profession in Canada and to determine what employers are seeking.

# BLOC-NOTES

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## **What Does It Take to Work in the Translation Profession in Canada in the 21st Century? *Exploring a Database of Job Advertisements***

### **RÉSUMÉ**

Sous l'impulsion du mouvement de mondialisation qui caractérise le <sup>xxi</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, les industries de la langue connaissent une véritable période de transition. Qu'en est-il de la profession de traducteur au Canada? C'est la principale question à laquelle le présent article vise à répondre. L'étude dont les résultats sont ici exposés s'appuie sur l'analyse d'offres d'emploi diffusées entre janvier 2000 et décembre 2002 par des employeurs cherchant à pourvoir des postes variés dans le secteur de la traduction. Sur la base des données recueillies, nous brosserons un portrait de l'état actuel de la profession de traducteur au Canada et nous tenterons de déterminer quel est le profil type du traducteur recherché par les employeurs.

### **ABSTRACT**

This article contains an investigation into the translation profession in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The aim of this study is to investigate translation from the perspective of those who employ translators by analyzing a database of job advertisements for a variety of translation-related positions that were collected between January 2000 and December 2002. Spurred on by the effects of globalization, the language industry is in a period of change. Based on empirical evidence collected from the database, this article attempts to evaluate the current state of the profession in Canada and to determine what employers are seeking.

### **MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS**

translation-related professions, translation in Canada, translation in the 21st century, employer's perspective, database of job advertisements

### **Introduction**

The profession of translation has a long and respected history in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Early settlers arriving in the sixteenth century came primarily from England and France, and when the new Canadian federation was established in 1867, the British North America Act<sup>2</sup> specified that English and French had equal status in the parliament and courts, and that laws had to be drafted in both these languages. Canada's linguistic policies have since been reinforced by the Official Languages Act (1969),<sup>3</sup> Quebec's Charter of the French Language (1977)<sup>4</sup> and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

(1982).<sup>5</sup> Such policies have contributed to the development of a thriving translation industry in Canada – one that enjoys an international reputation of excellence (CTISC 1999:2). Nevertheless, as is the case with all professions, translation has gone through numerous changes over the years. Spurred on by the effects of globalization and the information society, the language industries are currently in a period of rapid evolution and growth as “translation is becoming an economic activity with growing importance as a factor contributing to increased sales, revenue and employment” (CTISC 1999:3). In other words, these days, translation is big business.

This poses a great challenge for both employers – who are seeking candidates with very specific skills – and translator trainers – who are faced with the task of turning out graduates who meet these demands.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this paper is to investigate the state of the translation profession<sup>7</sup> in Canada in the 21st century *from the perspective of those who employ translators*. This is done by analyzing a database of job advertisements for a variety of translation-related positions, which were collected over a three-year period from January 2000 to December 2002. Based on empirical evidence from the database, this paper attempts to evaluate the current state of the profession in Canada and to determine what employers are looking for.

This paper is divided into three main sections. Section 1 describes the design and compilation of the database and comments on the limitations of the database. In section 2, the contents of the database are analyzed and discussed and, where relevant, these findings are compared to those of other researchers, including those of the Canadian Translation Industry Sectoral Committee (CTISC), which published a report entitled *Survey of the Canadian Translation Industry* in 1999. Finally, section 3 concludes with some general observations about the translation industry in Canada in the early 21st century.

### **1. Database design and compilation**

The database contains a total of 301 advertisements for jobs in Canada collected between January 2000 and December 2002. All of the ads are for jobs relating to translation (e.g. translators, terminologists, revisers, localization specialists).<sup>8</sup> The job ads come from four types of sources:

- 1) Canadian newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Montreal Gazette*, *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* (78 ads);
- 2) The job bulletin board at the School of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Ottawa (78 ads);
- 3) Canadian online job sites: workopolis.com and monster.ca (74 ads);
- 4) Advertisements distributed by the two largest Canadian professional translation associations: the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) and the *Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec* (OTTIAQ) (71 ads).

The goal was to collect the ads into a database from which it would then be possible to extract corpora consisting of those ads meeting specified criteria (e.g. all jobs for translators working in the health domain in Ottawa). For this reason, wherever possible, the ads were collected in electronic form. When this was not possible, the ads were converted into digital form using either optical character recognition (OCR) software, or in cases where the ad was not conducive to OCR (e.g. smudged newspaper), by keying in the data.

Some of the jobs were advertised in more than one source simultaneously (e.g. in two different newspapers, in a newspaper and on an online job site). Every effort was made to avoid duplication of ads in the database, which meant that if a

job was advertised in more than one source, only the ad first encountered was added to the database.

Once the ads were converted into electronic form, they were indexed according to the criteria outlined in Table 1. This indexing was done using a controlled vocabulary drawn up specifically for this project, where each concept was represented by a single indexing term. For example, the idea that might have been expressed in the jobs ads by various expressions such as “able to meet tight deadlines” or “able to work in a high pressure environment” was indexed using the controlled vocabulary term “work under pressure.”

Figure 1 illustrates how the job ads and indexing information are stored in the database, while Figure 2 shows the results of a search performed using a combination of indexing criteria. All ads meeting the search criteria can then be exported in plain text format and can be further processed using other software such as corpus analysis tools.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.1 Limitations of the database

The database has a number of limitations that must be kept in mind when interpreting the data. This does not mean that the database has no value. As pointed out by Atkins *et al.* (1992:6), even an imperfect collection can be a source of useful information, as long as one is aware of its shortcomings.

The first limitation of the database is that it does not provide comprehensive coverage of the

TABLE 1  
Indexing criteria used in the job ads database

Indexing criteria	Description
Source	Where the job was advertised
Date	When the job was advertised
Job	The type of job (e.g. translator, interpreter, terminologist)
Employer	The name of the company advertising the position
Location	The city and province where the job is located
Permanent (yes/no)	Whether the job is permanent or contract
Full-time (yes/no)	Whether the job is full-time or part-time
Professional association (yes/no)	Whether it is a requirement/asset for the candidate to be a certified member of a professional association (e.g. OTTIAQ)
Examination (yes/no)	Whether the candidate is required to take an examination as part of the hiring process
Language(s)	The language(s) and language directions
Domain	The subject field
Qualifications	Formal qualifications (e.g. degree, years of experience) that the candidate must have
Required skills	Specific skills required to do the job (e.g. computer skills, domain knowledge)
Other keywords	Other key words relevant to the ad

FIGURE 1  
A sample entry from the  
database of job ads

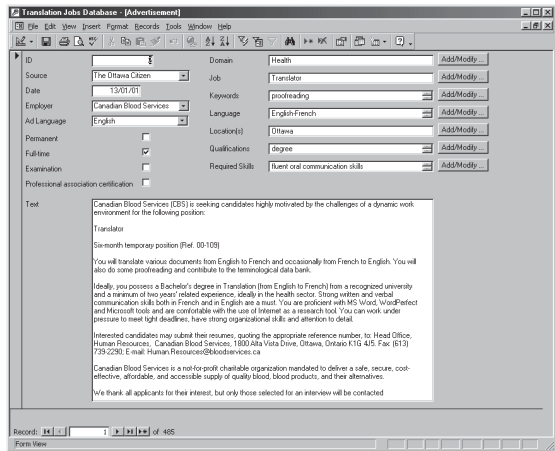
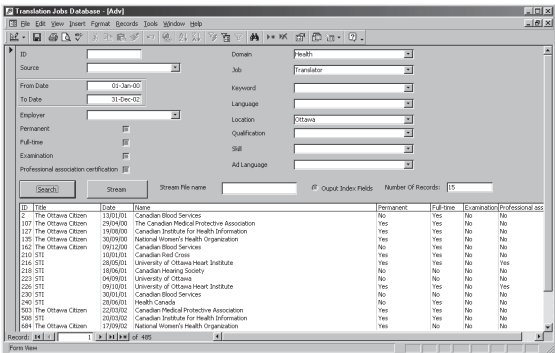


FIGURE 2  
The results of a search in the database  
of job ads



Canadian job market. The reason for this was largely pragmatic. Collecting advertisements was a labour-intensive process, and it was not possible to search in all the newspapers published across the country. However, efforts were made to consult sources that did provide national coverage, such as the national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, as well as national online job sites. Nevertheless, the database is not perfectly balanced in terms of geographic coverage.

Another limitation of the database is that it can only provide information about jobs that have been advertised. This means that positions that exist but have not had a turnover in personnel are not represented. In addition, jobs that are not advertised, such as freelance contracts where clients communicate directly with candidates, or jobs filled through competitions, such as those held by

the Government of Canada's Translation Bureau, are not represented in the database.

Additionally, even though a position has been advertised, it is not possible to tell whether the position is a newly created position or a replacement position, which means that the database cannot be used to definitively determine whether the overall number of jobs for translation-related positions in Canada is increasing or decreasing.

Finally, even though an advertisement lists desired skills, it is not possible to tell whether the successful candidate actually met these criteria. It may be the case, for instance, that the company in question was willing to settle for a candidate with lesser qualifications, or the company may have been fortunate enough to hire a candidate who surpassed the minimum advertised qualifications. It may even happen that the position was not filled at all.

2. Data and discussion

In spite of the limitations of the database outlined in the preceding section, it can still provide some interesting insights into the current state of the translation profession in Canada, as well as the types of skills and qualifications that are in demand by employers. The following sections will present and discuss data from the database under the following headings: number and types of jobs, languages, geographic locations, domains, qualifications, required skills, and employment conditions.

2.1 Number and types of jobs

As previously mentioned, the total number of translation-related job ads in the database is 301. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the ads according to job type.

TABLE 2  
Summary of ads for translation-related  
positions

Job type	Number of ads in database	Percentage
Translator	161	53.5%
Translator-reviser	31	10.3%
Localization specialist	28	9.3%
Reviser	16	5.3%
Translation manager	16	5.3%
Translation professor	16	5.3%
Terminologist	11	3.7%
Translator-writer	10	3.3%
Interpreter	8	2.7%
Translator-terminologist	3	1.0%
Translator-interpreter	1	0.3%
Total	301	100%

Slightly more than half (53.5%) of the jobs in the database are for translators proper, though it is interesting to note that an additional 15% of the jobs are for hybrid positions where candidates will be expected to play a dual role, carrying out the duties of both a translator and another type of language professional (e.g. translator-reviser, translator-writer, translator-terminologist, translator-interpreter). This combined total of 68.5% of the jobs is somewhat lower than the figure suggested by the Canadian Translation Industry Sectoral Committee (CTISC) report (1999:11), which indicates that translation per se represents 80% of the demand in Canada.

The CTISC report goes on to state that interpretation represents an additional 10% of the demand (1999:11). At 2.7%, the number of ads for interpreters in the database was much lower; however, this low number can be explained by the fact that many jobs for interpreters are offered on a freelance basis. This means that clients are likely to communicate directly with interpreters rather than formally advertising such positions.

Finally, the CTISC report notes that related services, such as terminology, writing and revision, account for the remaining 10% of the demand (1999:11). Meanwhile, the data in the database reveal that 28.8% of the ads are for related services, including translation managers, terminologists, revisers, professors and localization specialists.

Interestingly, the developing area of localization is not mentioned by the CTISC as a related service. In fact, the CTISC notes that in 1999, "Canada has little presence in the field of localization" (1999:75), but the report does go on to identify localization as a "strong-growth field," noting that "Alongside traditional industry professionals, i.e., translators, terminologists and interpreters, new professional categories are emerging. The translation industry is expanding to include various communication processes, specifically localization..." CTISC (1999:79). The CTISC predictions regarding the future growth of localization in Canada, as well as Barabé's (2003:5) statement that "Canada is becoming a major force in the field of localisation," are supported by the data in the database: jobs for localization specialists are the third most commonly advertised type of position and they make up 9.3% of the ads in the database. Based on this information, it would appear that localization is indeed a growth industry that has become more established in Canada in the years since the CTISC report was published.

The database also included 16 (5.3%) ads for professors in translation departments at Canadian universities. The CTISC (1999:30) identified eleven universities in Canada that offer some type of

translator training. Both the CTISC (1999:19) and Shadbolt (2002:30-31) noted that these training programs are turning out a combined total of approximately 300-400 graduates per year, while the market demand for new professionals is between 900 and 1000.

In addition to encouraging universities to turn out more translation graduates in general, the CTISC (1999:90-91) also notes that since the translation industry now includes activities such as localization, and since some firms cannot find specialists to meet these needs, new university courses should be created in order to "provide the human resources needed for emerging industry niches" (1999:95), and to train students in a wider range of skills, including computer skills (CTISC 1999:83).

Based on the evidence in the database, it would seem that Canadian universities are attempting to respond to the market needs.<sup>10</sup> As illustrated in Table 3, of the eleven universities that offer translator training, eight advertised at least one position for a translation professor between January 2000 and December 2002, for a total of 16 positions advertised. In addition, of the 16 ads, almost half (7 ads) indicated that the candidate should be able to teach courses in localization or in translation technology. This data would seem to support an observation made by Shadbolt (2002:33) that "Training for localization is gaining prominence in Canada." Indeed, since the publication of the CTISC report in 1999, three Canadian universities – all of which advertised positions for professors specializing in localization – have begun to offer training programs specifically in localization. The Université du Québec en Outaouais (formerly known as the Université du Québec à Hull) was the first to offer such a program beginning in the 2001/2002 academic year with a "*Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées en localisation*" (Locke 2002). Beginning in the 2002/2003 academic year, Concordia University began to offer a "*Certificat de deuxième cycle en localisation*" and the Université de Montréal began to offer a post-graduate "*microprogramme en localisation*" and a "*certificat en localisation*" (Damiani 2002). Many other universities (e.g. University of Ottawa, Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface) include some localization training as part of the translation technology courses offered within their regular translator training programs. Furthermore, the Canadian Government recently announced a multi-million dollar investment in a Language Technology Research Centre that will be dedicated to helping produce new technologies in support of Canadian language industries, which includes companies working in translation and localization (Lemieux 2003:1).

TABLE 3

**Positions advertised for translation professors at Canadian universities**

Universities offering translator training (CTISC 1999:30)	Number of ads for professors	Number of ads specifically for localization/translation technology professors
Université de Montréal	3	1
University of Ottawa	2	1
Université Concordia	1	1
McGill University	0	0
Université Laval	1	0
York University	1	1
Laurentian University	0	0
Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface	1	0
Université de Moncton	2	0
Université du Québec en Outaouais (formerly Université du Québec à Hull)	5	3
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>

*2.2 Languages*

Canada is an officially bilingual country with both English and French enjoying official-language status. It is therefore not surprising to see that 293 ads are for translation-related positions requiring at least<sup>11</sup> the use of these two languages.

In addition, in keeping with the fact that there are currently a greater number of Anglophones than Francophones residing in Canada, it is not surprising to see that the bulk of the official-language translation work takes place from English into French (225 ads = 76.8%) while less work is done from French into English (68 ads = 23.2%). Interestingly, of those advertisements aimed at official language translators, 36 (12.3%) are seeking candidates who are able to work in both language directions (i.e., both English-French and French-English).

While English and French are clearly the mainstay of the translation industry in Canada, Canadian society is also recognized as being a multicultural mosaic, where immigrants are encouraged to maintain their original cultural and linguistic identity and blend this with their new Canadian identity. Immigration statistics reported by Barabé (2003:4) indicate that in 2001, close to 50% of Canada's population was of a descent other than Canadian, British or French. Barabé (2003:5) adds that Canada's constitutionally protected multiculturalism policy<sup>12</sup> has raised expectations that citizens can be served by the government in languages other than the country's official languages. This being the case, one might expect to see a clear demand for translation in languages

other than French and English. Furthermore, in this era of globalization, one might also expect there to be a demand for translation into a wider variety of languages for exports. Barabé (2003:4) reports that Canada's exports make up almost 47% of its gross domestic product (GDP), adding that "in today's marketplace, trade takes place in the language(s) of the target market."

Indeed, both immigration and exports seem to have contributed to a need for translation in a variety of languages. As outlined in Table 4, there were 78 ads in the database for jobs involving some degree of work<sup>13</sup> between either English or French and one of 27 other languages. In addition, there were some vague requests for candidates who could work in "Asian languages" or "Middle Eastern languages" or for candidates who, in addition to English and French, had any European language or any language at all as a 3<sup>rd</sup> working language. There were, however, no jobs in the database requiring work between two foreign (i.e., non-official) languages.

Although there is evidence that non-official language translation does take place in Canada, overall, the data in the database are largely consistent with an observation made by Shadbolt (2002:30) that, in Canada, work in languages other than English and French accounts for a relatively small share of the total market demand and that translation suppliers in Canada specialize, for the most part, in the official languages. The database also supports a number of criticisms made by the CTISC (1999:70), including the fact that "the Canadian industry lacks diversification in the translation of languages other than French and English."

TABLE 4

**Jobs involving foreign languages**

Spanish	15	Tamil*	3	Estonian*	1	Turkish*	1
Chinese <sup>14</sup> †	10	Hebrew †	2	Farsi*	1	Ukrainian*	1
Arabic †	5	Korean †	2	Greek †	1	Urdu*	1
German †	5	Vietnamese*	2	Italian	1	Asian	2
Portuguese <sup>15</sup> †	5	Afar*	1	Malay †	1	Middle Eastern	1
Japanese †	4	Albanian*	1	Polish*	1	Any European	1
Russian †	4	Bosnian*	1	Serbo-Croatian*	1	Any 3 <sup>rd</sup> language	2
Somali*	3	Burmese*	1	Tagalog †	1	Total	78

\*Jobs in these languages were *only* for interpreters.

†Jobs in these languages included *some* jobs for localization specialists.

Although the data in Table 4 seem to indicate that a range of non-official languages is in play, all of these languages together account for barely one fifth of the market demand represented in the database. This is in line with the CTISC findings, which show that only 20% of the translation work done in Canada involves non-official languages (1999:15).

In addition, it should be noted that the vast majority of jobs in the database involving foreign languages are for interpreters or localization specialists, with few non-official language jobs being offered to translators or terminologists. We must, however, keep in mind the possibility that, while Canadian companies may not employ full-time terminologists or translators to work in non-official languages, they may hire such professionals on a freelance basis.

In terms of the actual languages in question, the CTISC (1999:81) considers that languages useful in Canada include Spanish, German, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, with Spanish being the non-official language most in demand (1999:15). The ads in the database are largely in accordance with these findings: Spanish is the non-official language most in demand in the ads, and German, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese and Korean are all featured. In addition, however, the database shows that Arabic and Russian are also somewhat in demand. Meanwhile, Barabé (2003:4) notes that over the past 30 years, immigration to Canada from Asia and the Middle East has increased from 14% to 40%. This correlates to the data in the database, which shows that languages in demand include a variety of Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Tamil, Korean, Vietnamese, Burmese, Malay, Urdu) and Middle Eastern (e.g. Arabic, Hebrew, Farsi, Turkish) languages.

The CTISC (1999:52) emphasizes that “knowing a third language well is considered increasingly

to be a necessity around the world,” and they encourage universities to offer more advanced training in additional languages; however, of the 16 advertisements for translation professors (see Table 3), only one indicated that knowledge of a third language was desirable.

In addition, the CTISC (1999:73) recommends that the Canadian industry should make a serious effort to position itself strongly as a manager of multilingual translation and interpretation projects, noting that if it does not, it will run the risk of becoming a secondary player working for foreign firms. However, based on the database evidence, it would appear that the Canadian industry is still focused primarily on the domestic (i.e., official language) market and has some way to go before it can be considered a major player in international (i.e., foreign language) markets.

### 2.3 Geographic locations

Given that most of the translation-related work in Canada deals with English and French, it is not unexpected to find that the data in the database indicate that the vast majority of the jobs<sup>16</sup> are located in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and particularly in the National Capital Region (Ottawa-Gatineau), as shown in Table 5. Ontario and Quebec are the two most densely populated and industrialized provinces in Canada, and they are home to two of the nation’s largest cities – Toronto and Montreal respectively. In addition, the predominantly English-speaking Ontario and the predominantly French-speaking Quebec share a border on which sits the nation’s capital. The noted concentration of jobs in Ontario and Quebec (90.5%) is in line with the observations made by both Shadbolt (2002:32) and the CTISC (1999:21), which indicate that more than 80% of Canada’s translation, terminology and interpretation work is carried out in these provinces.



TABLE 5  
Geographic locations of translation-related jobs

National Capital Region (Ottawa-Gatineau)	143 (45.3%)	Yukon Territory	2 (0.6%)
Ontario (including 62 in Toronto)	89 (28.3%)	Manitoba	1 (0.3%)
Quebec (including 38 in Montreal)	53 (16.8%)	Newfoundland	0
New Brunswick	13 (4.1%)	Nova Scotia	0
Alberta	3 (0.9%)	Nunavut	0
British Columbia	3 (0.9%)	Prince Edward Island	0
Northwest Territories	3 (0.9%)		
Saskatchewan	2 (0.6%)	Teleworking	4 (1.3%)

There is, however, a discrepancy between the database and the CTISC findings with regard to the province that ranks third for the number of translation jobs. The CTISC (1999:21) states that British Columbia is the third most active province with regard to translation activity, and Shadbolt (2002:32) also comments that translation is rapidly expanding in British Columbia. Meanwhile, in the database, there were only 3 advertisements for translation-related positions in British Columbia. One reason for this discrepancy may be that, as explained in section 2.1, the database is not perfectly balanced in terms of its national coverage.

According to the data in the database, the province with the next-highest concentration of advertised jobs is New Brunswick, which is not surprising given that it is Canada's only officially bilingual province. The CTISC (1999:22) ranks New Brunswick as the fourth largest province in terms of number of firms and translators and interpreters, so in this respect, both the database and the CTISC findings are relatively in line with one another.

The database contained very few ads for jobs in the remaining provinces. It is interesting to

note, however, that a number of ads indicated that candidates would be able to telework. Translation is a profession that can be well suited to teleworking since files can easily be transferred electronically. Although the percentage of ads for teleworkers was quite small (only 1.3%), it is interesting to see that employers are beginning to recognize that they need not be limited by geography when it comes to hiring translators.

With regard to the distribution of jobs at a municipal level, the CTISC report (1999:6) indicates that Montreal reported the highest number of translators, followed by the National Capital Region, then Toronto. The ads in the database show those same cities to be in the top three positions, though in a slightly different order (i.e., National Capital Region, Toronto, Montreal).

2.4 Domains

In terms of the domains in which translation-related work is required in Canada, this data is summarized in Table 6. The CTISC (1997:37) identified the following domains as growth areas:

TABLE 6  
Domains in which translation-related work is in demand. Note that in some cases, a single ad indicated that work would be carried out in more than one domain

Domains identified in the database of job ads				Domains identified by CTISC (1999:37) as growth areas
Business (including administration and marketing)	105	Education	13	Aerospace
Finance (including insurance, banking, economics)	88	Defence	11	Transportation
Hi-tech (including computing, telecommunications, engineering)	66	General	7	Business services
Health (including pharmaceuticals)	45	Arts and culture (including tourism)	5	Pharmaceuticals
Law	33	Not specified in ad	37	Telecommunications
Government-related	28			Finance
Transportation (including automotive, aviation, space)	18			Information Technology
Science	16			International organizations



aerospace, transportation, business services, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, finance, information technology, and international organizations. The domains specified in the ads in the database overlap considerably with the CTISC list, with the following domains most in demand: business, finance, hi-tech and health-related fields.

The domains identified both in the database and by CTISC seem entirely reasonable. As a developed country with an interest in commerce and technology, it is not surprising to see that Canada has a clear need for translation work in fields related to various areas of business, finance and hi-tech. In addition, like many other countries, Canada has an aging population, so it is natural to see that there is a lot of work required in the health-care domain.

In terms of discrepancies, one domain that features prominently in the database that does not feature in the CTISC list is law. Furthermore, a domain that is under-represented in the database is that of government-related work; however, as noted previously, this may be explained by the fact that the government normally tends to hire language professionals through organized competitions, rather than through advertisements.

2.5 Qualifications

According to the CTISC (1999:17) language professionals in Canada have a high level of education, with 81% of the professionals holding at least a Bachelor's degree, and 26% of these a Master's degree. However, the CTISC (1999:31) also reports on what it refers to as a "disturbing trend": the number of students graduating with a certificate is on the rise, while the number of students graduating with a Bachelor's or Master's degree is dropping. CTSIC identifies this as a problem because "translation firms and large companies look mainly for individuals with a BA Honours or Master's degree" (CTISC 1999:83).

As illustrated in Table 7, the ads in the database reveal a slightly different picture. 185 (61.5%) of the ads were seeking candidates with a degree in hand, while an additional 20 (6.6%) ads were aimed at students (e.g. for internships or work placements) who were required to be registered in an undergraduate degree program. This means that just over two-thirds of the jobs are reserved for candidates holding or working towards a degree, while the remaining third appear to be open to candidates who do not possess a degree.

The CTISC (1999:78) also observes that while employers generally require a degree, it does not necessarily have to be in translation. As summarized in Table 8, this is true of the ads in the database also, although the overwhelming major-

TABLE 7  
Level of qualifications sought by employers in database of job ads

Level of qualification required	No. of ads	%
Degree	185	61.5%
Registered for a degree (for student jobs)	20	6.6%
Certificate	7	2.3%
Secondary school	1	0.3%
No formal educational requirements specified	88	29.2%
Total	301	100%

TABLE 8  
Area of degree specialization sought by employers in database of job ads

Area of degree specialization requested by employer (for degree holders and students registered in degree programs)	Number of ads	%
Translation	159	77.6%
Domain specialization (e.g. law, science)	8	3.9%
Linguistics	3	1.5%
French	3	1.5%
English	1	0.5%
"Relevant" discipline	19	9.3%
Unspecified	12	5.9%
Total	205	100%

ity (159 ads = 77.6%) did express a preference for hiring a candidate with a degree in translation proper.

A formal qualification such as a degree was not the only type of qualification requested by employers. In addition, 223 (74.1%) of the ads required the candidate to have some previous experience. The CTISC (1999:79) indicates that most employers prefer to hire language professionals with 3-4 years experience, and the data in the database support these findings. As outlined in Table 9, there were 64 (28.7%) ads that wanted a candidate who was "experienced" but did not specify precisely how much experience was required, while of the ads that did specify, the most commonly requested amount of experience was 3 years (21.1%), followed by 5 years (18.8%). The highest amount of experience requested was 10 years, though this was for a very small number of jobs (1.3%).

TABLE 9

**Number of years of experience desired  
by employers in database of job ads**

No. of years of experience required	No. of ads	%
1 year	7	3.1%
2 years	38	17.0%
3 years	47	21.1%
4 years	11	4.9%
5 years	42	18.8%
6 years	3	1.3%
7 years	4	1.8%
8 years	4	1.8%
9 years	0	0
10 years	3	1.3%
Not specified	64	28.7%
Total	223	100%

The CTISC (1999:79) went on to criticize the fact that few employers are willing to hire new university graduates or to offer them internships or other training opportunities because it takes too long to train new graduates to meet their clients' pressing needs. The CTISC (1999:88, 95) indicates that one of the ways in which the Canadian translation industry will need to change is by facilitating the entry of new translation graduates into the workforce.

Bélanger (2003:23) observes that in recent years, the industry does indeed appear to be increasing the number of work placement opportunities available to students. The data in the database also show that the industry is making an effort to help inexperienced translators to enter the labour market. The database reveals that employers aimed 20 (6.6%) of the jobs specifically at students (for internships or work placements), and an additional 12 (4%) jobs specifically at recent graduates (i.e., positions specifically advertised as being "junior" positions that required a degree but no prior experience). This represents 10.6% of the total number of jobs advertised, which, though not overly generous, seems at least to be reasonable. In addition, as indicated in Table 9, there were 45 (20.1%) employers willing to consider candidates who had only 1 or 2 years of experience. Furthermore, we should remember that, even though an employer may have advertised for a candidate who ideally has 3 or more years of experience, the database cannot tell us the qualifications of the person who was eventually hired. It is entirely possible that the employer decided to fill the position with someone who had less than the sought-after amount of experience.

Of course, there could be another possible explanation as to why employers whose ads appear in the database seem willing to consider hiring less-qualified candidates. As observed by the CTISC (1999:19),

[...] the 1990-1991 recession and the ensuing downsizing gave the impression that the translation profession was irreparably in decline. Many guidance counsellors, lacking up-to-date information, even discouraged students from becoming translators. Because this impression still persists, despite a new demand for professionals, there are fewer student registrations and, accordingly, fewer graduates entering the industry.

Furthermore, because the current market demand for translators exceeds the supply (i.e., 300-400 graduates to fill 900-1000 positions), "firms are encountering increasing difficulty in locating seasoned translators" (CTISC 1999:18-19). Employers may find themselves in a dire situation created by the combination of fewer graduates and fewer experienced translators on the market, and this may prompt them to consider offering jobs to candidates who do not have a degree or who have less than 3 years of experience.

Some of the ads in the database required another type of qualification. Twenty-five (8.3%) of the ads indicated that the candidate would be required to take a company-set examination as part of, or prior to, the interview. One might imagine that employers could be using these company-set exams as a way of evaluating candidates who do not hold degrees or who do not have a significant amount of experience; however, only 9 (36%) of the ads requiring an examination were aimed at non-degree-holding candidates. Interestingly, the remaining 16 (64%) of these ads required this company-set exam to be taken in addition to requiring the candidate to hold a degree.

Finally, only 44 (14.6%) of the ads indicated that applicants should be certified by a recognized professional association (e.g. Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO), *Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec* (OTTIAQ)). This data would seem to support an observation made by the CTISC (1999:12), which notes that "clients know little of the Canadian translation industry [...]. Moreover, the professional status of certified translators is not widely valued." In the foreword to the CTISC report, the co-chairs of the Committee state "Having fought hard for professional recognition, translators, terminologists and interpreters must now see themselves – and promote themselves – as an industry." To achieve this, the professional associations must work harder to raise their profile and to

educate both potential members and employers about the benefits to be gained by hiring employees who have certified professional status. It would appear that associations themselves are beginning to recognize this need; in recent editions of the ATIO newsletter, the Chair of the Public Relations Committee outlined ATIO's plans to increase awareness – both within and outside the language industries – of the importance and value of professional certification (Cadieux 2001, 2003). Once a critical mass of language professionals holds such qualifications, it is hoped that professional recognition from outside the discipline will follow.

2.6 Required skills

In addition to having formal qualifications, candidates are typically expected to bring a range of skills to the job. The CTISC (1999:81) identify the following as the key skills that translation professionals should have:

- Professional skills: excellent understanding of the source language, and solid skills in writing and syntax in the target language.
- Personal abilities: well-rounded culture and intellectual curiosity, the ability to work within a team and the following qualities: adaptability, availability, motivation, good judgment, good communications skills and efficiency. Concern for the client and flexibility are also important.
- Mastery of a third language.
- Mastery in one field of specialization and the ability to work comfortably in some others.
- Mastery of computer tools.

According to the ads in the corpus, the most sought-after skills for those working in translation-related jobs are those summarized in Table 10.

It is reassuring to note that there is a considerable amount of overlap between the qualities that translation professionals themselves feel are very important (as reported by CTISC) and the skills that employers feel are important. These common skills include fluent written and oral communication skills, the ability to be a team player, relevant specialized domain knowledge, self-motivation, concern for clients, flexibility/adaptability, and familiarity with computer tools.

With specific regard to the use of computer tools, the CTISC (1999:21) notes that “the Canadian translation industry makes full use of basic computer tools,” but goes on to state that “the penetration rate of more sophisticated electronic tools is relatively low.” These observations would seem to be confirmed by the fact that although computer literacy (e.g. knowledge of basic tools such as word processors and the Internet) rates as the most sought-after skill by the employers in the job ads database (182 ads = 60.5%), only 55 (18.3%) of the ads specified that candidates should be able to use specialized translation tools (e.g. translation memories). These findings are in line with those of Quirion (2003:161), who states that less than one in six jobs for translators in Canada appear to require a knowledge of specialized translation software. Therefore, the data in the database seem to call into question – for the time being at least – strong claims such as the following:

TABLE 10  
Sought-after skills listed in the database of job ads

Skill	No. of ads	%	Skill	No. of ads	%
Computer literate (basic tools)	182	60.5%	Detail-oriented	45	15.0%
Team player	111	36.9%	Flexible/adaptable	38	12.6%
Work under pressure	110	36.5%	Web translation/mark up languages	34	11.3%
Fluent written communication skills	108	35.9%	Enthusiastic/passionate	31	10.3%
Domain knowledge	97	32.2%	Client-oriented	28	9.3%
Fluent oral communication skills	84	27.9%	Management skills	23	7.6%
Organizational skills	75	24.9%	Analytical	19	6.3%
Independent worker	58	19.3%	Creative	18	6.0%
Research skills	55	18.3%	Third language	10	3.3%
Specialized translation technology skills	55	18.3%	No skills specified	32	10.6%
Interpersonal skills	50	16.6%			

The industry expects its professionals to be at ease in using translation-related technologies. This means having more than a theoretical knowledge, as they must have familiarity with various aids for translation. (CTISC 1999:52)

In Canada, on-line communications and multimedia products and services are creating a whole new approach to translation, one that demands an exceptionally high level of technological competency. (Barabé 2003:5)

However, it is very important to consider the following trend, illustrated in Table 11, which can be observed when the data in the database are broken down by year.

TABLE 7

**A trend showing an increase in the number of jobs requiring specialized translation technology skills**

Year	Number of ads requiring a knowledge of specialized translation technology
2000	8
2001	17
2002	30
Total	55

Basically, the database indicates that the number of jobs requiring candidates to be familiar with specialized translation tools is virtually doubling on an annual basis. If this trend continues, it will not be long before a significant number of jobs do indeed require this type of knowledge.

CTISC (1999:80) and Barabé (2003:5) also report that Web site translation is a growing niche market. Indeed, the database does seem to support this claim since 34 (11.3%) of the ads indicated that candidates should have knowledge of mark up languages (e.g. HTML) or have experience translating Web sites.

In terms of discrepancies between the CTISC list of required skills and the database information, CTISC feels that knowledge of a third language, good judgment, and a well-rounded culture are important qualities for translators to have, while these do not feature highly in the database. With regard to a third language, only 10 (3.3%) of the ads called for this skill. Meanwhile, the qualities of good judgment and a well-rounded culture were not specifically listed as desirable skills. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that employers do not value these qualities.

Employers in the database do, however, specify in 110 (36.5%) of the ads that candidates should be able to "work under pressure" or "meet tight dead-

lines." This could be seen as a sign of the employers' desire to increase productivity, as noted by CTISC (1999:52, 80). Other skills that employers seem to value highly, but which did not feature specifically on the CTISC list, include organizational skills, research skills, and attention to detail.

## 2.7 Employment conditions

With regard to employment conditions, an investigation of the database revealed that out of the 301 translation-related jobs advertised, 204 (67.8%) are for permanent positions, and 264 (87.7%) are for full-time positions. However, when interpreting this data, it is very important to keep in mind that much of the work that is available in the language industries is offered on a freelance basis, which means that it is likely to be neither full-time nor permanent. This should not necessarily be viewed in a negative light since many language professionals value the flexibility that comes with freelance work. However, as explained in section 2.1, freelance work is not well represented in the database, which may help to explain the discrepancy between the figures in the database, and those stemming from the 1995 census data gathered by Statistics Canada, which indicate that only 42.6% of workers in the language industry worked in full-time positions (CTISC 1999:7).

With regard to salary, 179 (59.5%) of the 301 ads do not discuss this. Of the remaining 122 ads, 27 (9%) claim to offer a "competitive" or "attractive" salary, 17 (5.6%) indicate that the salary offered will depend on the experience of the candidate, 5 (1.7%) invite candidates to state their salary expectations as part of their application, and 73 (24.3%) actually specify a figure (in Canadian dollars). Of these 73, the lowest annual salary offered was \$25,000, while the highest was \$90,000. In fact, most of the 73 ads give a salary range, and using the figures from the mid-point of each of the salary ranges, it was possible to calculate that \$48,373 is the median annual salary offered, while the mean or average salary is \$49,379.

The data gathered by Statistics Canada for the 1995 census indicates that the average annual income for a language professional in Canada at that time was \$40,570, which represented a drop from the 1990 average income of \$42,100 (CTISC 1999:8). The CTISC (1999:20) note that, given the level of education and average number of years of experience of translators, this average annual income is quite low. Happily, the ads in the database would seem to indicate that the average income for language professionals in Canada in the 21st century is on the rise, which makes sense if one accepts that, as noted by Anobile (2000:vii), Sprung

(2000:ix) and Allen (2003:300), the language industry is booming and language professionals are currently in high demand.

### 3. Concluding remarks

Though limited in a number of ways, the database of job ads still provides a means of gaining some insight into the current state of the translation profession in Canada, particularly as viewed from an employer's perspective. It reveals, for example, what types of qualifications and skills employers expect candidates to have, in what languages and domains they are needed, and what type of compensation they can expect to receive for their efforts. This database also provides a body of empirical data that can go some way towards supporting or refuting a number of claims that have been made about the profession. In this final section, I will summarize some of the main characteristics of the translation profession in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as portrayed through the database of job advertisements, and I will comment on some possible future trends.

Employers who advertise for translation-related positions in Canada seem to be relatively in tune with the skill set required to work as a translator in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Computer skills – both general and specialized – are now considered to be very important; however, it is also reassuring to note that employers do not appear to be under the false impression that computers will replace translators, or that computer skills are all that is required to do the job. Rather, important skills that are fundamental to producing high-quality documentation, such as research skills, organizational skills, attention to detail and fluent writing skills, still feature frequently in the job ads. Furthermore, the desire to hire team players who have good interpersonal skills might be indicative of a new attitude towards the document production process, where translation is seen as a link in the document production chain, rather than as an isolated component.

There also appears to be recognition on the part of the employers that there is a shortage of seasoned translators on the market, which means that new translators must be integrated into the workforce. Accordingly, employers seem willing to hire translators with relatively little experience, and they are offering higher salaries in order to attract good candidates.

In addition, the pressures being brought to bear on employers by the need to participate in the global market are clearly filtering down to translators, as seen by the requests for candidates who can work under pressure, who can work independently, who already have domain knowledge, and

who can use computer tools to help increase productivity.

The changing global marketplace also seems to be responsible for bringing the language industries in Canada to the brink of three other important changes. Firstly, Canada seems to be taking steps to break into the localization business as is evidenced by the increasing number of advertisements for localization specialists and the recent establishment of a number of localization training programs. Over the next few years, these programs will begin to turn out graduates who are qualified localization professionals and who will be in a good position to help Canadian businesses to establish a presence in the increasingly multilingual global marketplace. A greater presence in the global market and the localization industry will also have an effect on the actual languages that are part of Canada's language industries. While there will undoubtedly still be a significant need for translation work in Canada's two official languages, the coming years promise to show an increase in demand for localization specialists who can work in a range of other languages that are sought after on the global market. Finally, as the range of languages expands, the geographic location of the jobs in Canada may also shift. While jobs focusing on French and English may still be concentrated in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, jobs requiring other languages may be dispersed elsewhere in the country. For example, there is a significant Asian population in the province of British Columbia, so the coming years may see an increase in translation-related jobs in languages such as Chinese, Japanese or Korean being located on the western coast.

In summary, while some of the distinguishing features of the translation profession in Canada seem to have been carried over from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is also evidence to suggest that this profession is poised to make a number of changes, such as introducing a wider range of languages (particularly for localization and interpretation work) and increasing efforts to educate employers about what the profession has to offer. All in all, it is an exciting time for Canadians who are involved in the language industries.

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## NOTES

1. For an overview, see Delisle (1987).
2. To read the British North America Act online, go to: <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/const/loireg/p1t1-1.html>. The section dealing with official languages can be found in Part 5, article 133.
3. To read the Official Languages Act online, go to: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/O-3.01/>
4. To read the Charter of the French Language online, go to: <http://www.olf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/>
5. To read the Charter of Rights and Freedoms online, go to: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/index.html>
6. As noted by Anderman and Rogers (2000:65), employers sometimes find that the skills possessed by recent translation graduates do not mesh well with the requirements of the translation market.
7. For a similar investigation into the terminology profession, see Bowker (2002).
8. The database also contains an additional 184 ads for technical writers and technical editors, but this data has not been included in the present report.
9. The corpus analysis tool used for this research project is WordSmith Tools: <http://www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-459286-3>
10. Of course, as pointed out in section 2.1, one of the limitations of the database is that it is not possible to tell whether an advertised position is a new position or a replacement position. As observed by the CTISC (1999:32), the current teaching staff at Canadian translation departments is aging, so some of the advertised positions may have been aimed at replacing retirees.
11. Some advertisements are aimed at candidates who can work in multiple (not just two) languages.
12. In 1971, Canada became the first country to adopt a multiculturalism policy, and since then, numerous laws have been enacted to prohibit racial discrimination and to promote immigration (Barabé 2003:4).
13. In some cases, this work involving foreign languages was to be done *in addition* to official language work, whereas in other cases, the work was solely between one of the official languages and one or more foreign languages.
14. Four ads specified "Chinese," 3 specified "Cantonese" and 3 specified "Mandarin." These numbers have been combined in Table 4 under the heading "Chinese."
15. Two ads specified "Portuguese" while 3 specified "Brazilian Portuguese." These numbers have been combined in Table 4 under the heading "Portuguese."
16. Note that the total number of jobs in Table 5 appears to add up to 316 (instead of 301). This is because some employers had offices in multiple locations and offered candidates the choice of where they would prefer to work. In addition, some employers offered candidates the choice of working either in-house or teleworking.

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