

UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y EDUCACIÓN
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS MODERNOS

Más allá de las palabras:
Adentrándome en el negocio de la traducción

ADELA CICKOVIC YAKIMOV

MÉRIDA, DICIEMBRE 2009.

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Behind the words:
Getting to know the translation business

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Informe final de pasantías presentado por la Br. Adela Cickovic Yakimov como requisito parcial para optar al título de Licenciada en Idiomas Modernos.

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INTRODUCTION

In the final stage of our learning process at the University of Los Andes, each of us, students of Modern Languages can opt between writing a work similar to a thesis (called “memoria de grado”) or doing an internship. Most of us choose the latter as we are given an opportunity to test ourselves in new surroundings, put the acquired linguistic skills into practice and by the end, reaffirm our knowledge. In a way, we go through a transitional phase that allows us to start bidding farewell to numerous books and classrooms we get accustomed to, and take firsts real steps toward our professional future.

I entered the final stage of my university studies as I applied for the position of a project assistant and began carrying out my internship in January 2008. My host institution was Lexcelera, a renowned translation agency in Paris. With its ever-growing network of translators, the agency offers high-quality services on which many top national and international companies have come to rely on. Every year, it accepts interns from different countries, interested in broadening their horizons and improving their command of English and French. As one of them, I was able to participate in diverse translation projects and liaise with a great number of clients and translators.

In the following pages, I will elaborate in detail on my experience as an intern at Lexcelera. I will first provide the basic information on the agency’s history and describe its work, structure and objectives. In the next part, I will mention the duties I performed during my internship and explain what they

entailed. Following that, I will present a reflection essay about entering the world of translation and what I have learned from it. As living in Paris enabled me to get to know the city up close, I will also give an analysis on some of its central features and how they give it a unique spirit.

To conclude this report, I will share my thoughts on the results of my internship, from both personal and academic point of views, and make a few suggestions to the host institution and to the School of Modern Languages - bearing in mind the positive impact they could have on the work of future interns if implemented. Through these conclusions and advices, I will offer my final impressions and point out important realizations that will stay with me beyond graduation.

PROFILE OF THE HOST INSTITUTION

Located in central Paris, Lexcelera is one of the leading European translation providers. It was founded in 1986 by Lori Thicke and Patrick Rogers, and it started out as a small business with just a handful of translators. At the time, they had no computers to rely on but instead used typewriters and delivered their work either by messengers or by fax. Over the years, however, good business skills and the development of new technologies led Lexcelera to grow into a well-established translation agency and in 2001; it became the first one in France to receive ISO 9001:2000 quality certification¹.

Operating under the name of Eurotexte from its beginnings, the agency adopted its current name in 2007 in order to better reflect its core values: languages, excellence and acceleration. The change was both a strategy to appeal to more clients outside Europe and a reaffirmation of many years of expertise that guarantee great results. Today Lexcelera offers translation services in more than 50 languages, has 14 full-time employees and works with around 320 freelance translators from all over the world via the Internet. The translators are specialized in many different fields (finance, medicine, electronics, human resources, etc.), which is important as the clients of the agency belong to a wide range of industries. There are law firms, hypermarket chains, multi-national automakers, entertainment and media companies, corporate groups, cosmetic suppliers, computer and video game publishers, among others. Since the needs of each client

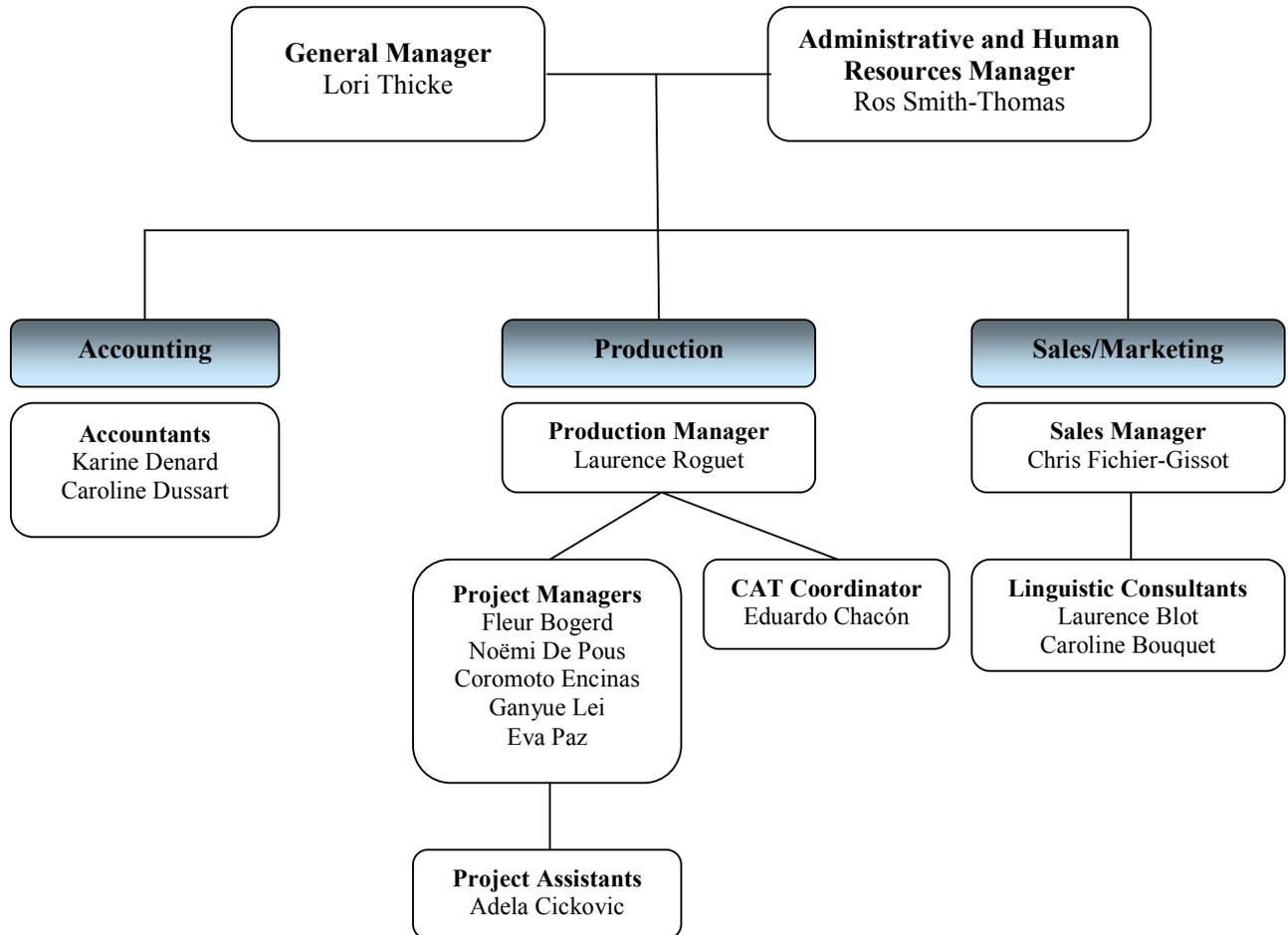
¹ ISO 9001:2000 is an internationally recognized standard that guarantees quality management of business.

vary and change on a regular basis, the aim of the agency is to meet them accordingly and ensure a job well-done. Therefore, alongside speed and quality, flexibility and responsiveness are key in keeping the clients satisfied.

Although translation is the most sought out service, Lexcelera also provides proofreading, editing, transcription, interpreting, desktop publishing, and website and software localization. Whenever a request for one of these services comes in, it is handled as a project where everything is carefully carried out and supervised. These jobs require continuous teamwork in a fast-moving business environment. Organization is, hence, a priority at the agency and it is based on the cooperation between three departments: Sales and Marketing, Accounting and Production. Whether the focus of the employees is on networking and marshalling resources, overseeing financial operations or managing every step of a project, the main goal is to keep the business running as smoothly as possible.

While Lexcelera always strives to establish excellent and long-lasting relationships with its clients and fulfil their expectations, it also seeks to help people and communities in difficulty. For this reason, in 1993, the agency created Traducteurs Sans Frontières (TSF) or Translators Without Borders, a non-profit association dedicated to providing free translations to humanitarian organizations. The volunteers of TSF are professional translators who work on all types of documents dealing with important international issues. They translate around 1 million words a year, all of which is done in their spare time. By operating TSF, Lexcelera supports humanitarian groups in making a difference in the world and along the way, contributes to building the humanitarian image of translation.

Lexcelera: 2008 organizational chart



NATURE OF THE INTERNSHIP

During my internship at Lexcelera, I worked as a project assistant in the Production Department, where translation projects are overseen. For seven hours a day, from Monday to Friday, my job was to help five project managers in handling their work. In order to do that to the best of my abilities, first I had to go through a brief period of training and learn what was expected from me. After I completed it, I started to take on my duties, which ranged from something as simple as faxing a document or sending an email to acknowledge safe receipt of a text, to more time-consuming tasks such as assembling glossaries or finding and organizing a team of translators for a large-scale project.

Although what I had to do each day varied and depended on the workload shared by everyone in the Production Department, I regularly had to perform the following tasks:

a) General

- ❖ answer the phone, take messages and if necessary, provide information on Lexcelera's services
- ❖ copy, scan and fax documents
- ❖ stamp letters and packages and take them to the post office before 6pm
- ❖ attend the staff meetings, take notes and when needed, also ask questions or make suggestions

b) Project management-related

- ❖ reply to client emails and prepare and send price quotes concerning their translation requests
- ❖ create and print out job sheets with all the important information about a project: job number, name of the client, language combination, deadline, etc.
- ❖ organize, print out and save emails into their corresponding folders
- ❖ use CAT tools to analyze and prepare different types of files for translation
- ❖ find the right translator and/or editor for a project depending on the subject area, and prepare and send purchase orders for their services
- ❖ send texts, translation memories, glossaries, guidelines, reference material, specific instructions and any additional information to translators and editors
- ❖ save translated and edited files into their corresponding folders and do quality assurance checks to make sure the texts are complete and that the layout is the same as in the original files
- ❖ deliver projects to clients and answer any follow-up questions they might have
- ❖ add clients to the database and update their contact information
- ❖ search for terms in texts and add them to glossaries

In addition to the duties mentioned, which were carried out by all the project assistants, I also took care of the schedule of an editor from Canada working exclusively for Lexcelera. Any time an editing job was assigned to her, one of the project managers or assistants provided me with the job details. Upon

receiving this information, I updated the editor's schedule and sent her the necessary files and instructions.

Even with all the knowledge of productions procedures that I acquired and applied to my work daily, there were often unexpected factors that came into play, which meant that there were other tasks for which I could not prepare myself. From not receiving a translation on time to dealing with technical difficulties, every urgent situation required me to find the best solution possible to a problem in the shortest amount of time and thereby fully execute my responsibilities as a project assistant.

REFLECTION ESSAY

Ever since I entered the university, I knew that the internship was going to be a significant part of my studies. As a student of Modern Languages, I always hoped that I would be able to carry it out abroad and live for a while in one of the cultures about which I had been learning. When the internship at Lexcelera was first suggested to me, I thought it would be a unique opportunity to practice several foreign languages and try out something new. My only concern was that I would not be qualified enough for the position of a project assistant as I had not taken any translation courses, however, I was soon assured that it would not be a problem. After everything was settled and I started the necessary paperwork, an intern's handbook was sent to me so I could get a general idea about the personnel organization, production processes and technology used by the agency. I was excited to get a first glimpse of what was awaiting me and began to form a more precise idea of what I would be doing.

Only two short days upon my arrival in Paris, I found myself at Lexcelera where I was welcomed by Ros Smith-Thomas, my supervisor and administrative and human resources manager. She showed me around the office, introduced me to everyone and gave me a brief account of the agency's work and objectives. After that, I was given a training schedule and some guides about the procedures to read over the following few days. The documents I was to study contained detailed instructions and step by step explanations of different tasks related to

project management. The instructions that I found there were very useful and I looked forward to putting the information learned into practice.

The first week at Lexcelera I was trained by an intern who I had come to replace and who was soon leaving. He showed me how to use some computer programs that I was not completely familiar with and further elaborated the reading material that I went through. Several project managers also took part in my training. Each of them showed me a different aspect of my job and made sure I knew how to execute my tasks by including me progressively in their projects. They were very patient whenever I had questions and took their time to provide me with detailed answers if necessary. Other project assistants were very supportive as well. They would give me extra tips and tell me what I needed to focus on the most in order to work faster and be more efficient.

The beginning of my internship coincided with some changes within the agency. Up to that point each intern in the Production Department assisted one or two project managers. When I arrived, it was decided that I, as well as other future interns, would be at disposal of all five project managers. In this way, if one of the assistants was unavailable or absent; project managers could share their workload with another one. On the one hand, I thought this was good for me because I could learn more by working with more people. I knew each one of them would contribute to my learning process in a different manner and the combined knowledge would definitely give me a better perspective on the job. On the other hand, I was not sure how exactly everything was going to work and if I was going to have to participate in too many projects at the same time. I also did not know if

some of them were automatically going to take priority over the rest or if it was a decision I had to make myself along the way.

It took some practice, but after a while I found my place within the agency and adapted to the fast-paced working rhythm. I very quickly realized that being quick yet thorough was essential to doing my job. The more experience I gained, the more confident I felt and hence, the faster and better I performed my tasks. Being organized was also important. Whenever possible, I tried to plan ahead, which enabled me to keep track of everything I had to do and determine how much workload I could later take on. Nonetheless, it was not always possible to rely on planning. Some tasks required being dealt with as they came up and quite often there were urgent matters that needed to be addressed immediately.

Assisting all the project managers provided me with possibilities to be versatile. As their clients varied, I was involved in projects that were diverse in scope. I was quite busy on most days so I had to distribute my time well between everything I did. I always made sure to follow the instructions that I received and ask questions if I had any doubts. Usually once a week, I also attended the Production Department meetings where business strategies were assessed, particular issues were discussed and new ideas were shared. Sometimes all the departments gathered together to examine and go over general matters concerning the agency.

Since Lexcelera has employees from various countries, I had the chance to immerse myself into a multicultural environment and continuously practice English, French and occasionally Italian. While speaking English on a daily basis

came easily to me, I felt hesitant at first when I had to communicate in French since I had had no contact with the language outside the classroom. This is why answering the phone was one of my least favorite duties at first. I was afraid that I was going to misunderstand the person at the other end of the line and as a consequence, take a wrong message or provide incorrect information. Still, I made myself talk on the phone as frequently as possible and the conversations usually went smoothly.

Eventually, I started noticing that I was getting much better in the way that I expressed myself in both English and French and that there were also some improvements regarding Italian. I was less self-aware when I spoke to someone and due to the fact that a significant part of the communication with clients and translators occurred via email, I was constantly practicing my writing skills. I sent dozens of messages each day, which required me to be clear and precise and to use a vocabulary reflecting certain level of formality. The constant switching from one language to another made me more aware of the differences and similarities between them, yet it was something I did automatically, without thinking much about it.

Having completed a few computer training courses throughout the years, I felt more confident with the programs. Computers were the main tool of work at Lexcelera and almost nothing was done without them. There was a variety of applications I had to use and some of them were completely new to me. Without the IT knowledge that I had previously acquired, it would have definitely taken me more time to find my way around and start helping everyone with their

projects. For example, I needed to be familiar with many file formats (.doc, .xls, .pdf, .jpg, .txt, .html, etc.) in order to analyze and prepare texts for translation or check them before delivery. Whether I handled a simple 1-page Word document or a 150-slide PowerPoint presentation with graphics, tables, images and comments; understanding different types of files certainly helped me save time and be more productive in my work.

However, while my computer skills were helpful, I still had a lot to learn about CAT (computer-aided translation) tools and their use. As my experience in the translation field up to my internship was limited, I was not fully aware of the importance of that kind of software. It was when I became more involved in all the aspects of the production process that I discovered the advantages of CAT tools not only for the translators, but for me as well. Having access to terminology and segments of previously translated texts through CAT tools meant that a translator could work faster and do a more accurate and consistent job, and it allowed me to assure a good quality of service, especially within very tight time frames.

As an assistant, I participated in all of the stages of project management and handled both the translators and the clients. Initially, as I was still learning, I worked only with the former. I often contacted them to see if they were available for either translating or editing jobs that still needed to be placed. Sometimes finding the right person for those projects did not require much effort since the one contacted first would be available, other times many translators were already booked or on vacation so the pressure to meet the deadline would increase. These

kind of stressful situations were definitely challenging, but they taught me how to take control and act fast. Even when the circumstances were not ideal, there was a way to get around difficulties, I just had to consider carefully all the options and make quick decisions.

Moreover, when projects were assigned, I also supervised them and made sure that everything went smoothly during the translation process. If a translator had a question or an unexpected issue came up, such as files being inaccessible or glossaries being inconsistent, I needed to take care of it as soon as possible. By staying on top of things, I could avoid having a small problem become a bigger one and guarantee better results in the long run. Once translations were done, I checked them to see if anything was missing from the content and if the layout matched the original one. While this was only a visual review, it still gave me further insight into intricacies of languages and helped me understand better the differences in the abilities of translators. Their styles varied and I was always interested in seeing how they could give their own shape to the content written by a person of another cultural background.

As time passed, I focused on the clients as well and dealt with translation requests. The important thing was to take into account all their needs and assess how they could be achieved. For example, I could not handle a small and a big-volume document in the same manner, especially since the subject, language combination, delivery deadline and end-users of those texts also varied. If the information I received was unclear or insufficient, I made sure to ask questions on the specifics that I needed, so I could proceed in the right direction. Due to too

many constraints, some requests were impossible to meet, but instead of rejecting them, the aim was to propose the best solution possible. This is where I sometimes worked with the sales personnel, who would step in and help orient the clients.

Although I could not really prepare myself for the demands of each project, I studied different internal guidelines on some of the regular clients so I could get to know them well. By doing so, I could learn about their preferences, general instructions and in some cases, anticipate what I would be required to do. Once projects were underway, I also kept an eye on possible changes and updates. Whether the original texts were modified or new specifications were provided, I had to ensure corresponding adjustments were made within the process. Later on, after deliveries were completed and job sheets were given to the accountants, clients could still have additional questions or remarks, which I took care of. The accountants contacted me as well if they had any doubts regarding closed projects and I always tried to provide them all the answers they needed.

The most interesting part of my internship was when I got to manage entire projects by myself. It allowed me to enhance my problem-solving abilities and view my duties from another perspective as all the responsibility lied in my hands. By then, I had enough experience to know what type of challenges to expect and how to face them. Even though it was not unusual for something unplanned to happen, which could be frustrating and demanding at times, I was glad to be able to rely on myself and deal with whatever issue arised. I liked being more independent in regards to making decisions and seeing my role within the department evolve. Most of all, it was rewarding to give back some of the help I

received from everyone at Lexcelera and to know that I could contribute to the work of the team even more than I expected when I started working at the agency.

A few weeks before the end of my internship two interns arrived - one of them to replace me - and I was asked if I would be able to be in charge of their training. I was glad to help and it actually gave me an opportunity to reflect upon how much I had learned and changed over a period of six months. I could suddenly see myself at the other end of the spectrum, performing my tasks with confidence and ease instead of trying to get accustomed to new surroundings and a job that I knew nothing about. My goal was to both guide the interns through the duties of a project assistant and to make them feel welcome and comfortable. I did my best to keep my explanations and advices as simple and practical as possible, and also to share any additional information that I did not initially discover myself, but that later on turned out to be of great use.

My last days at Lexcelera were bittersweet. I was excited about going home and resuming my everyday life, but I was not looking forward to leaving a workplace that I felt I was part of and saying goodbye to everyone. I was fortunate to meet great people with whom I formed close working relationships and friendships and on whom I could always count on for mentorship and support. The period time I spent at the agency certainly showed me the benefits of opening up to new experiences and made me more aware of my career options. I got an inside look at a real-life job related to my studies, which is going to be an advantage for me in the world of work. Every aspect of being a project assistant

added new layers to my knowledge and potential and consequently, I went through an important personal and professional growth during my internship.

CULTURAL ASPECT

All roads lead to the Seine: a journey through the heart of Paris

As the home of numerous artists and the capital of love, Paris draws millions of visitors each year longing to experience its unique atmosphere. Very vibrant and rich in culture, the city overflows with attractions and stimulates all the senses. For people who lack of time or simply want to start exploring Paris, one of the best routes to take is the historic River Seine, which arches through the center and mirrors the beautiful appearance of the cityscape. There is a special romanticism in strolling along the banks of the river with the view of the city's skyline and landmarks, particularly since it is possible to enjoy a variety of the features that capture the Parisian spirit. Aside from being visually appealing, the surroundings make impression because they emphasize the significance of the past and reveal the traces of the lifestyle today.

The River Seine is spanned by over 30 stunning bridges, built low enough so the scenery beyond them is not obstructed and can be fully appreciated. Most of them are accessible to vehicles, but there are a few that are pedestrian. Since they all differ in style, they have become pathways into different points in time and reflect a deep, interesting history and many lives that have shaped it. One of the most notable bridges is the oldest one built over the river, the Pont Neuf (see Appendix 5.1), which name actually translates as "New Bridge". It consists of a series of stone arches and stands out for its fortified appearance. Inaugurated in the early 17th century, it was the first bridge that had pavements and no houses on

both sides and thus it became a favorite place for people to gather at the time. Another bridge that draws attention is the Pont Alexandre III (see Appendix 5.2), often considered to be the most beautiful and elegant in all of Paris. Named after the Russian Tsar Alexander III, it is prominent due to its lavishness and exuberance. It consists of a single span steel arch and it is decorated with many lampposts, large statues and gilded nymphs, cherubs and horses.

From all the amazing structures that can be observed beside the Seine, there are a few that simply must be visited. One that is impossible to miss is the Eiffel Tower (see Appendix 5.3), an enduring symbol of France. Although it is easily recognizable because of its iconic status, it is impossible to tell how huge and impressive it is before seeing it in person. It can be noticed from many places in Paris and has established a vivid presence - a glimpse of it can be caught over the rooftops, between buildings, out of the windows. The daring shape of a tall iron arrow that can be looked through makes the Eiffel Tower the centerpiece of the city and beyond doubt a marvel of the modern times. The panoramic view from the top is quite striking, as well as the sight of tons of interlaced metal pieces that can be observed from under the structure. At night, the Tower also provides a magnificent show as numerous beaming lights display its shape, giving it a dream-like quality. Whether it is perceived as truly beautiful or not, it cannot be denied that it is memorable and that has become an inherent part of the Parisian identity.

Another significant construction that borders the river is the Louvre Museum (see Appendix 5.4). This almost rectangular complex with three wings

houses many famous works of art, the most famous being Mona Lisa and the Venus of Milo. Seeing the Museum in one day is impossible since the place is massive and taking time to admire all the treasures it holds would probably take weeks. It is filled with most amazing collections of paintings, sculptures, furniture, antiquities and other historical items. Nonetheless, even without entering, the complex can be admired from the outside, which is impressive in its own right. The diverse characteristics it exhibits are a great example of how the Parisian culture successfully combines quite contrasting old and new elements, creating a distinct imagery of the city and a lasting impression. In this case, the elaborate classical buildings surround a huge imposing courtyard in the middle of which a large iron pyramid covered with glass panes is erected and accompanied by three smaller ones. Although the pyramids are very modern-looking, they fit well with their background and are aesthetically pleasing. The eclectic look of the courtyard, completed with few fountains and reflecting pools, unveils a place where the influences of the past are clearly strong, but it still welcomes the modern and effectively incorporates the changes.

The Notre Dame Cathedral (see Appendix 5.5) is also a construction on the Seine that strongly characterizes Paris. Raised as a gothic building with two towers, it is probably most recognizable for its striking façade lined with archways, decorations, carvings and other wonderful details, intricate in design. Facing the main entrance, a golden starred point is marked in the plaza and this spot is considered to be the official center of the city. The Cathedral has a solemn yet serene quality to it, especially inside where it has a feel of a sanctuary. It

accentuates the spiritual aspect of Paris and the sense of permanence it holds. The small separated areas with shrines and statues, all the circular glass stained windows with mesmerizing motifs and the haunting acoustics are only some of the features of the Cathedral that give it the mystic air. This is further deepened by the presence of some darker elements such as the eerie gargoyles along the edge of its towers. Half-men and half-beasts, the gargoyles look at the ground stretching below them in order to scare harmful spirits and warn them away.

Art, music and vitality are everywhere in Paris. On many corners near the Seine, street performers such as musicians, mimes, fire-eaters and puppeteers display their talents trying to earn money. They can gather notable groups of spectators, who stop for a while to immerse themselves in the entertainment or even join in. When the weather is warmer, people also organize special evenings and meet at the river to dance to all sorts of music: tango, salsa, rock 'n' roll, swing, etc. Those who are not confident enough to follow the rhythm are always invited to watch how dancers of all ages execute elaborated steps and demonstrate their love of melody. The river is actually a platform for many activities. Some people go to its banks to relax, simply enjoy the sun or read books. Others like to soak in the romantic scenery by organizing picnics and drinking wine. They are also those who enjoy physical exercise and so ride bicycles, use rollerblades, play with ball, etc. During the summer months, the "Paris Beach" event takes place and as a result, the Seine is one of the three places in the city that get transformed into full-scale beaches. As the most traditional of the locations, the Seine beach includes sand, deckchairs, parasols and play areas.

At certain points of the river, particularly near landmarks, there are metro stations, characterized by their Art Nouveau entrances (see Appendix 5.6). More than a hundred years old, the Paris Metro is a significant part of the city's culture as it can tell many stories of its inhabitants. As a very practical and affordable mean of moving around, the Metro is meeting ground for people of different origins and it reflects a myriad of personalities, tastes and behaviors. In fact, it is a gallery that shows the many faces of Paris and demonstrates how diverse and lively the city is. As the population is the combination of natives and immigrants from many countries, this is easily evidenced through the presence of a variety of customs and languages. The Metro, in particular, is the place where they all come together and blend. Sidewalk cafes (see Appendix 5.7) are an important fixture of the city and the river area. They have a discreet charm to them that makes them perfect places to socialize and relax. However, there is a certain tradition in sitting and sipping. The whole point is to enjoy a more restful lifestyle so there is no need to rush. Buying a drink implies taking time at the table, reading newspaper, writing notes or watching everyone pass by. Although sidewalk cafes do not serve anything as elaborate as the dishes prepared in restaurants, they are great for having a light meal and slowly soaking in the Parisian atmosphere.

On both sides of the Seine, many dark green boxes are attached to the elevated walls. The boxes belong to the riverside vendors (see Appendix 5.8) who sell used books, vintage magazines, old and new prints, drawings and postcards, and other interesting things. These items are perfect souvenirs or gifts and since there are so many to choose from, it is easy to get lost in browsing. Making a

purchase is also an enjoyable process due to the fact that the vendors are not pushy and have a laid-back attitude. As riverside merchants, they first established themselves in the 16th century and nowadays their posts are very coveted since they have to wait for years before receiving permission and using boxes for selling. Their presence has defined the Seine and they have become intrinsic to its identity.

As the River Seine cuts through Paris vertically, it a great way to get to know many amazing city constructions, monuments and open areas. It captures important moments in history and the everyday life rhythm. There are, of course, many incredible sights to be discovered in other parts of Paris, but all the best secrets are undoubtedly kept in its heart – the Seine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Lexcelera:

When I look back in time and think about the months I spent at Lexcelera, I feel very grateful because I was able to enhance the language skills acquired in the classroom and apply them to real projects. The support and guidance I was given helped me prepare and perform my job better and gain knowledge of the translation business from different angles. However, there are some suggestions that I would like to make, which could give place to improvements and lead to more satisfying internships:

- ❖ Although project assistants have always worked 35 hours from Monday to Friday, in the past their schedules were organized in a way that allowed them to have a half day off each week. Having again a flexible schedule that would provide assistants some free time other than weekends, would definitely benefit them. It would give them a chance to go to more cultural events, take some courses that interest them and participate in activities free for students on working days only.
- ❖ The job of helping five project managers implies dealing with different approaches to work and it is not always easy to determine what the tasks of higher importance are. In order to ensure easier workflow, project assistant training should be more structured in content. It should be oriented not only toward getting acquainted with the production procedures and the duties they

entail, but also toward establishing the tasks that take precedence and handling several projects at the same time.

To the School of Modern languages:

Studying Modern Languages at the University of Los Andes has been very rewarding. Over the past years, each semester presented me new challenges to tackle, through which I could always learn valuable lessons. Still, there are some parts of this process that could be improved and thereby result in more positive internship experiences:

- ❖ Outside the classroom, the opportunities to speak foreign languages are rare and few. Practice really makes a difference and for this reason, the program of study should include fewer courses taught in Spanish. By performing more activities in English and French, students would better develop their abilities in languages outside their mother tongue and increase their level of competency and confidence.
- ❖ The professional market is very competitive and in many workplaces, it has become necessary to know how to use computer applications to solve problems. Implementing courses where the students can expand their IT knowledge and apply it to different language areas should be mandatory. Technology literacy is essential nowadays and the better computer skills a student acquires during the academic formation, the easier it will be to later make the transition to the world of work and complete diverse job-related tasks.

CONCLUSIONS

Alongside education, work experience is the main key to getting a good job. The internship that I carried out at Lexcelera both provided me that experience and allowed me to explore my interests careerwise. By working at the agency, I was exposed to a learning environment where I could continuously use the tools that I obtained during my academic formation and apply them in formal and informal situations. I improved my oral and written communication skills in several foreign languages and gained a new perspective on different cultures. In addition, I was able to meet people from diverse backgrounds and build important interpersonal relationships.

Performing my duties in an often hectic workplace while trying to adapt to a new life was not always easy, but it helped me to prepare myself for what is to come upon graduation. By evaluating my personal goals and testing my knowledge in a professional setting, I got to know myself better and developed deeper insight into my abilities. I polished my work habits and learned how to handle myself under pressure and be self-reliant. I could also identify my strengths and weaknesses and I used that knowledge to make progress. Overall, my job as a project assistant offered me possibilities to upgrade my potential, make the most of it and see where it could eventually take me.

I can say that throughout the course of my internship I grew both personally and professionally. Prior arriving to the agency, I did not fully realize how crucial the process of translation is in many industries and how vital it is for a

variety of purposes. Now I appreciate more the extent of work that goes into running a translation business and value the teamwork behind it that makes all the pieces come successfully together. Overcoming obstacles can sometimes be an endeavor, but conquering goals implies dedication, commitment and determination. This belief has been proved to me and it is what motivates to strive for the best. I feel ready to enter the following stage of my life and step up to different challenges along the way.

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