

Translators are the most impactful people in the world

(At least until the robots take over)

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Have you ever wondered what a translator does? A translator is a person who translates anything that involves two or more languages. The languages can be translated through writing, verbal communication, or communicated by sign language. The more complex and complicated the concepts and words being translated are the greater the requirement of you needing a translator. If you live in a country that has a language, translators are going to be one of the most important people in that country because they act as a two-way portal between your language/culture and others.

There are many examples of the importance of translators importance shown thru out history. First, the word translation comes from the Latin term to bring or carry across. My being able to share this translation is because of hard work from someone in the past. Also, did you know that the first bible printed in the USA was translated from English to the Algonquin language in 1663. This was a part of the colonization and assimilation process of the native American tribes that impacted the whole western world. Another example is Arabic translators preserving and translating works from the ancient Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle. Imagine not having major tenets of western philosophy because we did not have those important Arabic translators. Mistranslation can also cause huge important impacts in history. In World War II the US warned Japan about the nuclear bomb and offered the chance to surrender. But the Japanese government responded by saying “Mokumatu” which means “no comment”.

Sadly, the translator messed up and misinterpreted the word as “not worthy of comment.” which read as a refusal to surrender by the US. History might have changed if that one word was translated properly.

The second reason why translators are one of the most important jobs are seen in the media we consume every day. All nations try to advance science and technology within their borders. But if they simply rely on their advancements from work created using only their country’s languages, they will quickly struggle to make major advancements. In the 18th century, a woman named Claudine Picardet was a chemist who translated scientific works from Swedish, German, Italian, and English. This undoubtedly helped scientists speaking those languages in their respective countries to make great advancements

The third reason why translators are one of the most important jobs is because of cultural differences. Any nation’s language(s) is embedded in its culture and citizens’ personal identities. But without translators will not be to communicate with one another. In the age of globalization, it easy to get in contact with anybody around the world because of translators facilitating technological spread. In the case of the US for example, any Netflix shows that are made in a different language are translated into English. Even speeches from leaders around the world are translated, sometimes in real-time, for us to hear. The translators allow us to glimpse into the leadership and ideas of other countries that might affect us. However, if you mess up translating like HSBC did it can get costly. They spent 10 million dollars to rebrand, but their translator mistranslated their catchphrase as “Do nothing “ instead of what they meant to say which was “Assume nothing”.

No matter what our future robot overlords may tell us translators will forever be integral to human society. The transfer of knowledge and culture facilitated by translators is a strength of humankind. Without them who knows where we would be and where we may go.

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