

You know you're a translator when...

you listen to the words on the news, rather than the news (and think when did I last use the word "spate"?)

you have more dictionaries than your local public library.

no one will play Trivial Pursuit with you.

you always have something to talk about with a member of any profession or trade that you meet at a school event or a party, and they are surprised that you know anything about what they do.

you know where foreign language magazines are sold in your town.

you automatically edit every flyer that is left on your windshield or under your door, even though you would never buy what it offers.

you finally got tired of doing crossword puzzles.

you get tired of reading.

you can explain the grammar of one language in another and have often had to do it.

you can tell how long a translation will take you to do without knowing how you can figure that out.

if asked directly, you cannot remember what you translated three days ago unless you think hard about it.

you can always recognize a text you have translated, although you may not recognize your own translation of it immediately.

you have a hard time pronouncing foreign expressions in English because you keep thinking of how they are supposed to be pronounced in their own language (báynal or bá-nal).

you listen to native speakers with an odd concentration on how they use ordinary words, not complicated ones.

you often have questions about form, rather than substance: is there a period after Drs?

you are more interested in verb tenses than anyone else ever is.

you have stopped complaining about the quality of the source text until you get something so outrageously dumb that you have to send it to all your colleagues (the "stupidest sentence of the month" contest).

you know you can justify buying cookbooks as part of your library because one day, you can be sure you will have to translate a recipe.

the subjects you thought you wouldn't be interested in at first turn out to be where you spend much of your time and you can't understand why someone else says they're not interesting.

you find out things about people and learn you really can keep a secret.

you look at signs in stores or in factories, to see how people say things (not at what they say).

you have given up insisting that a word is never used in some way because you know that if you do, you will find it with that meaning in the next day's newspaper.

you are confronted with a new expression you've never seen before, tear out your hair trying to translate it and then find it in every text you're asked to translate for two weeks.

you remember that you have translated an expression but can't remember how – but can remember where it occurred and for whom you translated it.

you have a funny feeling about a word, that it can't be what the obvious choice of translation is but it takes a while to remember why.

someone asks you what a word means and you know the answer, of course, but then cannot remember what language it is in and are relieved when you look it up and you are right.

your paperless office is stacked with paper.

you are secretly convinced that it is now your fingers that do the translating, not your brain.

you cannot remember the last time you went downtown and didn't stop in a bookstore.

you have too many favorites in your browser.

you go to translation conferences because no one in your family is interested in hearing about your interesting solutions to translation problems any more.

you realize that translation, even from home, brings you into contact with many people every day.

you know you write more clearly than most of what you translate and much of what you read in your own language.

you still think all business letters should be written using the model you learned in the fourth grade.

you still remember how you learned to write a business letter in the fourth grade.

you can still spell well, but not as well as you used to.

you know more about many subjects than anyone else who doesn't work with them for a living.

you can shift from translating one subject to another that is completely unrelated to it without skipping a beat.

you know that if a client tells you a text is difficult, it is likely to be easy and if you are told it is easy, you immediately become uneasy.

you can be polite even to rude people who don't know what they are talking about.

you happily answer questions from colleagues because you know you will be asking them others and realize you need their help.

you have a hard time throwing away illustrated brochures on subjects you once translated but haven't looked at in years.

you know more about word processing programs than almost anyone.

you have a favorite pen.

you always say yes when someone asks if you will have time for a translation next week because you know the text is almost never ready when they have promised it for and there's no point in scheduling what you don't have on hand.

you have finally found a hobby that doesn't involve words.

you instinctively know when you need distracting background music and when you can't stand it.

you are concentrating so hard on a text in order to finish it properly that the sound of a paperclip dropping can make you jump.

you have to visit a client's office and are amazed that people can get anything done in such conditions.

you are reluctant to go to visit the client but then are excited to have a chance to get dressed up.

you are surprised to see so many people out on the street during the day.

you recognize the voices of virtually all of your clients and are confused only if they speak to you in the "wrong" language.

you read the business or cultural pages of the local paper and see your press release printed in its entirety.

you spend much more on books, magazines, newspapers and your Internet connection than you ever have on clothes.

you have created a business by the sweat of your brow and you are justifiably proud of it, although your neighbors can't figure out what you do all day.

you have discovered a much more practical side to yourself than language majors were supposed to have.

you realize how much fun it is to write something (like this list) yourself and not think someone else's ideas.

you can see your own activities in the bigger picture – you know about interest rate trends when you borrow money, you know about how insurance agents are trained when you are being sold insurance.

you wonder what year in medical school “doctors” become “physicians”.

--you subscribe to publications no one would expect you to read, and you read them.

--you know you subscribe to too many newspapers and magazines, but can't decide which subscriptions to cancel;

--you make a point of going to foreign movies in languages you know and then get distracted reading the subtitles.

--you hear the source language you work with spoken in a shopping centre and a whole world of references springs to life in your mind.

you wouldn't trade professions with anyone.