



 Faiz Kermani describes how he translated his self-published children's books
It can be hard work, but it's paid off for Faiz

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Writing children's books started off as a one-off project away from my day job, but it has now grown into a regular, fun hobby. Although I write in English, I have always been interested in having my books translated into foreign languages. At first, I was unsure about how to go about this, but I found clues from working with translators during my day job. If it was possible to have work documents translated effectively into numerous different languages, then I reasoned that surely an adapted approach could be applied to my children's books?

Today, I have had my books translated into French, German and Spanish and have had encouraging feedback from foreign readers. The availability of my books in foreign languages has presented me with new opportunities to work with local schools and educators across the world. My books are being

currently translated into Russian and I am eager to see the outcome of this project. Every new language presents me with a whole range of new, exciting opportunities.

PREPARING FOR TRANSLATION

Self-publishing a translated version of a book from English will require patience and commitment. You will almost certainly need to 'tweak' elements of your self-publishing process to take into account the unique features of the foreign language you have chosen, like accents and special letters.

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Faiz Kermani is a British author who has lived in the UK and the US and is now based in France. As a PhD-qualified immunologist, his day job in the pharmaceutical industry is a world away from his fun hobby of writing children's fiction: www.faizkermani.com

Before you embark on a translation of your book, make sure that you have the finished product in English. Having something physically available that you are satisfied with will allow you to decide on your vision for the foreign version.

The next step is searching for a translator. By this I mean an actual person. Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to use online translation software to translate your book or other material. The available technology is far from perfect and you will get bizarre results that could prove to be highly embarrassing. Similarly, do not automatically choose someone because they speak the foreign language in question. A native speaker of a language is not necessarily competent in being a translator.

Translation is a technical, competitive field and translators are often highly qualified. Only professional translators understand how to ensure that when text is translated it continues to have the same impact on the reader as in the original language. Therefore, it is often best for translators to translate into their own language.

CHOOSING A TRANSLATOR

If you do not know a translator already, do your research. You will often find the same translators and their profiles listed on many websites. Crosschecking entries can assure you of their qualifications, experience and rates.

Another handy trick I have found when considering a new language version of my books is to ask a previous translator if they can recommend anyone for a specific language. Often translators will have worked with each other on different projects and so will have a diverse network. When you have found a potential translator, send them a friendly, introductory message about your proposed project, include a link to your website and ask about their interest and rates. Literary translation does not form a huge part of the work of many professional translators and you will find that many will jump at the chance to work with you.

Consequently, you can negotiate a mutually beneficial deal with the translator. Always make sure that you have a contract in place to ensure delivery

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of the work. In turn, the translator may ask for a small deposit.

Hopefully, your initial exchanges in setting up a project should give you an idea of how you might work together. Working with a translator should be an enjoyable experience and if this is not the case, then you may need to refer to the contract before things get out of control. You will undoubtedly have strong views of how you see the project moving forward, but at the same time, it is important to be open to ideas that the translator might have for the book. For the purposes of this article, I asked some of the people I have worked with for their opinions, which might help you with your projects.

Annabelle Labbé and Alejandro Ramos Pedragosa, who have translated my books into French and Spanish, explain that experience, a deep knowledge of both source and target languages, bicultural environment and a personal interest in the subject are all important ingredients for a translator.

"The willingness to listen to the story, to learn about it and to keep close to the author's imagination, is at



least as important as any other technical asset," they explain. Tatiana Alexeytseva, who has been translating my books into Russian, recommends that authors outline the degree of freedom they wish to entrust a translator early on.

"Be as literal as you can," she says. "You can say 'no major changes to my text', or 'you are completely free to adapt my text to the receiving audience as long as the original intentions are preserved', or something in the middle."

WORKING WITH A TRANSLATOR

Once you have an agreement with your translator, send them your book so that they can get a deeper understanding of the project. They will most likely come back to you with questions on particular aspects of your book. Dialogue with your translator is important to ensure the highest quality for your book, so be patient and understanding regarding their requests.

In my stories, I like to employ wacky humour and that has meant a lot of exchanging of ideas with the translators so that we can settle on something that stays true to the spirit of the original text, but more importantly, gets a laugh from the reader!

My book, *A First Guide to Space Creatures*, describes various surreal creatures with invented names and this has presented the translators with quite a challenge. "When translating into French, often the use of similar sounds did not transmit the same funny, frightening or bewildering connotation as intended in English," explains Annabelle Labbé. "I chose equivalent sounds in French and where there was a pun, I had to play with words in the same manner as in the original English text."

"Very seldom can you achieve a complete coincidence both in words and in meaning between both language versions," says Alejandro Ramos Pedragosa. "The main goal is to deliver the same mood or 'spirit' as in the original version without hampering the flow of the narrative."

Beyond this, your translator will probably outline how technicalities of their language may alter the specifics for your book, particularly page numbers.

"Translations from English into Russian are, as a rule, longer than the original texts," explains Tatiana Alexeytseva. "Russian words are longer and sentence structure also tends to be more complex." Similarly, when my books have been translated from English into German, the text length has extended by almost one third.

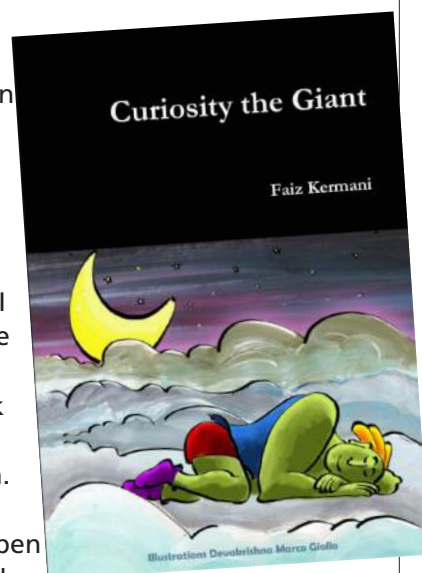
THE HOME STRAIGHT

Once your translators have worked their magic, the next stage is to get a second opinion of the translation. For this, I like to choose a native speaker of the language, and usually someone who is not a translator.

In this way, the reviewer should give you the viewpoint of an 'ordinary reader'. Choose someone reliable and if you are not sure, ask your translator if they can recommend someone. I have found that people are delighted to be asked to review a book and help in the final steps of the translation.

Good translators are open to considering feedback from reviewers as they will want to fine-tune the translation to ensure the best reaction from the future audience. In my experience, feedback has only resulted in minor modifications to incorporate alternative words, such as slang.

When the translated version is complete, you can produce traditional formats and ebooks using your



Dialogue with your translator is important to ensure the highest quality for your book...



usual publishing platform. For most languages this should be a straightforward process, but there may be occasions when you require some extra assistance from an experienced designer. For example, with the Russian translation of my book, the publishing platforms I have previously used do not readily accept non-Latin characters. Fortunately, the designer who has worked on my books was adept at dealing with these frustrating challenges.

"Most software is able to render text through 'Unicode Fonts', which are fairly safe across all platforms," explains Kimberley-Jane Leary, Managing Director of Kimberley-Jane Design.

"Fonts like Arial can handle non-Latin letters as their character list contain the required glyphs."



Unicode fonts work on both Microsoft Word and Adobe InDesign but one of their drawbacks is style. So although they can help in dealing with more exotic language translation options, they can restrict the stylistic options for your book. "With non-Latin characters functionality

rules over form which may result in a dull page," continues Kimberley-Jane Leary. "This is where you and your designer can get creative with designing some illustrations and page headers to keep the reader's attention."

PROMOTION OF YOUR TRANSLATED BOOK

Publicising a translated book will require dedicated additional marketing work, alongside your existing promotional efforts, but exciting opportunities exist. First of all, when your final book is out, do not forget your translator and your reviewer. As well as acknowledging them in your book, a signed copy will be much appreciated. They are invaluable allies for marketing and will be delighted to publicise your book to their family, friends and wider network of contacts. The prime target for your

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translation will most likely be markets where that language is used. However, your book may have marketing potential anywhere that foreign languages are taught.

Places where bilingual education is offered represent a promising area to explore. For example, Spanish is by far the most spoken non-English language in the US today and the number of speakers is predicted to grow substantially in the coming years.

There is already a rising demand for books in Spanish and some US competitions have categories for books that have been published in both Spanish and English.

A similar opportunity exists in certain European countries and regions, which border with areas where other languages are spoken. I have been working on literacy projects with APEPA, an association for parents of students in the public education system in Alsace, France. Given Alsace's location, next to Germany and Switzerland, APEPA have been promoting an option for students to have bilingual education, in French and German. Finally, do not forget that a translated version of your book can itself add a bit of glamour to your profile as an author. Publicity about your newly translated book might spark people's curiosity in the original English version and your other writing.

In my opinion, self-published authors should consider the possibility of translating their books. The process does present challenges, but with the right approach and a good translator, you should have nothing to fear. Making your books available in foreign languages will not only create additional opportunities for you to reach an international audience, but will also be a fun, culturally enriching experience.