

Diversify Successfully

with Online Language Teaching/ Cultural Experience Hosting

Translators/interpreters possess a wealth of linguistic and cultural knowledge that's highly valued by learners, so it makes sense to share it. By Carlie Sitzman

(The following was originally published on The Savvy Newcomer blog, <https://atasavvynewcomer.org>.)

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, my translation workload plummeted abruptly. With no way of knowing if and when my clients would return, I had to act fast to find more work that was compatible with my lifestyle as a freelance translator. One year of teaching online English classes in China in 2019 had opened my eyes to the world of online teaching, and I was sure this sector was rapidly expanding with lockdowns in place around the world. It turned out to be the perfect



industry to carry my business through the pandemic.

Linguistic and cultural skills such as those cultivated by most translators/interpreters are in high demand in education and are difficult to duplicate. There's clearly a shortage of good teachers, so I'm constantly turning down requests to take on teaching projects outside of my already packed regular teaching schedule. This industry is likely to remain active even after the pandemic and is a stable option for translators/interpreters looking to

diversify. In the following, I'll offer an introduction to the online teaching industry, discuss the necessary qualifications, tell you where you can find work, and go over some of the equipment you'll need to get started.

What's Online Teaching and Cultural Experience Hosting?

Online teaching consists of video conferencing online with one or more students for a predetermined amount of time in order to teach them something. The role is similar to a traditional classroom teacher, but with everything online. One great advantage of online teaching is that teachers can work in the country of their choice. The key is to figure out which clients are frequenting the online teaching platform you choose and cater to their needs. Most of my clients are in the U.S., so I offer courses on how to speak German.

With everyone yearning for a taste of international travel, online cultural experiences have grown in popularity over the past year. Cultural experience hosting is similar to online teaching. Instead of teaching a skill, however, cultural experience hosts strive to provide attendees the experience of doing something in a different country or another language. Cultural experiences can consist of courses where attendees engage in enjoyable hobbies while speaking another language with other participants or courses where participants engage in an activity specific to a certain culture. Cultural experiences

I've hosted include origami folding in German, German gingerbread cookie baking, art class in German, and a virtual shopping trip to a German Christmas market.

For the sake of simplicity, I'll refer to both online teaching and cultural experience hosting as "online teaching" in this article.

What Qualifications Are Required?

The most essential qualifications are life experience, valuable expertise that you're willing to share with others, and the ability to effectively sell that expertise. Although not absolutely necessary, an academic degree related to what you're teaching may help build credibility. You'll need to have or develop teaching skills, so a teaching certificate of some sort can be enormously helpful.

Translators/interpreters are generally fluent in multiple languages, have very valuable life experiences from living around the world, and are highly familiar with the corresponding cultural environs. This in and of itself makes translators/interpreters perfect online teachers and cultural experience hosts. Overcoming a natural tendency toward introversion has been the biggest challenge I've faced while teaching online.

Where Do I Find Work?

There are a great many ways to teach online. Before you choose one, you should decide how much time you want to invest in finding clients, what kinds of students you want to

teach, how much you want to be paid, and if you're willing to develop your own curriculum. Some online teaching platforms offer extra support with marketing and some provide you with fully-formed curriculum. You'll be able to earn considerably more if you're willing to write your own curriculum. Let's explore some options, including the pros and cons of each.

The most essential qualifications are life experience, valuable expertise that you're willing to share with others, and the ability to effectively sell that expertise.

Create Your Own Online Language School

This is the highest paying and most flexible option, but it also requires the most work. Not only will you have to write all your own curriculum, but you'll also have to bring in students yourself. In addition to collecting payment for you, online platforms in this category offer the technology required to set up your classes and offer them to the masses. The rest is up to you.

Platforms to Check Out:

Learnworlds
www.learnworlds.com

Teachable
<https://teachable.com>

Thinkific
www.thinkific.com

Udemy
www.udemy.com

Kajabi
<https://kajabi.com>

Mighty Networks
www.mightynetworks.com

Teach for a Flexible Online Company

If finding your own students is too much for you, teaching for a flexible online company is a good option. They'll advertise your classes and enroll students so you can focus on the nuts and bolts of teaching. You'll be expected to create your own curriculum and content on these platforms. Content is subject to review and will be advertised on the site once approved. You'll generally also be allowed to set prices as you see fit. Platforms in this category are often free to use but will collect payment for you and keep a small percentage of the proceeds.

Platforms to Check Out:

Outschool
<https://outschool.com>

Amazon
<https://bit.ly/teach-explore>

Airbnb
<https://bit.ly/airbnb-teach>

Viator
<https://bit.ly/Viator-host>

Meetup
<https://bit.ly/Meetup-teach>

Teach English in China

There are quite a few online English schools in China, all

Offering multiple services in different sectors or to different clients can help steady us when storms come. Diversification can help us hedge against hard times.

Creating Your Own Language School	Pro	Con
Pay	Unlimited! You can charge what you want per student per live class. You can also create self-guided classes that bring in passive income.	None
Curriculum	You teach whatever you want!	It's a lot of work to create everything from scratch.
Scheduling	Work when you want.	It's more time-consuming.
Prep Time	Once you have taught the same class several times, there's no prep time.	There's a tremendous amount of prep in the beginning.
Equipment	Use what you have or buy more.	None
Students	Teach anyone you want. Adults or children.	None

of which you can work for from the comfort of your own home. They usually provide you with a set of slides to use for each lesson and train you on their teaching methods. These companies can have policies that are hard to fathom at times and will sometimes subtract pay for seemingly minor offenses. Demand for English teachers in China is high, making it an easy way to gain experience in online teaching.

- Companies to check out:**
- Bling ABC
<https://t.blingabc.com/apply>
 - Zebra English
<https://bit.ly/Zebra-English>
 - Magic Ears
<https://t.mmears.com/v2>
 - QKids
<https://teacher.qkids.com>

What Resources Do I Need to Get Started?

No matter how good you think your built-in computer camera, microphone, and room lighting are, you're probably going to have to upgrade to be successful as an online teacher and cultural experience host. Here's what I consider the most essential equipment for online teaching.

Professional Lighting: To cultivate a professional presence online, it's essential to be properly illuminated on-camera. Buy a ring light or a set of those umbrella lights you see professional photographers using.

High-Resolution Camera: Built-in computer cameras are generally very low-

resolution and will negatively impact student experience. Low-quality cameras will also make you and your environment appear much darker on-screen than you really are. You'll need a high-quality external web camera to ensure that students can see you clearly.

Headset with Microphone: Students need to hear exactly how you're pronouncing things to learn a language well. You'll also have to hear them to correct their mistakes. Having a good headset with a microphone is vital to ensuring that students can learn effectively. Make sure it's comfortable to wear as well so your head doesn't hurt after a day of work.

Teach for a Flexible Online Company

	Pro	Con
Pay	You choose how much to charge.	You're slightly limited by what others are charging. If you price yourself out of the market, no one will take your class.
Curriculum	You teach whatever you want!	It's a lot of work to create everything from scratch.
Scheduling	You're in charge. Work when you want.	None
Prep Time	Once you have taught the same class several times, there's no prep time.	There's a tremendous amount of prep in the beginning.
Equipment	If you have the basics, you can create classes that don't require additional equipment.	None
Students	You may be teaching children or adults, depending on the platform.	None

Software: If you're working with direct clients, you may need a paid subscription to your favorite video conferencing software. You may also want to invest in teaching software that allows you to display pictures, words, numbers, and special effects directly on your camera screen.

Linguists: The Perfect Candidate for Online Teaching

I hope you can take this information and use it to diversify successfully with online teaching and cultural experience hosting. Translators/interpreters possess a wealth of linguistic and cultural knowledge that's highly valued by learners, so it makes sense to share it. 

Teach English in China

	Pro	Con
Pay	You always get paid what's promised.	The pay is much higher than minimum wage, but relatively low. Some companies subtract from your pay for silly things like being one minute late to class or having a single dissatisfied student.
Curriculum	Just use what they give you. Very little work required.	Sometimes the curriculum isn't all that great and there is nothing you can do about it.
Scheduling	Some companies are very flexible with scheduling. Classes usually start in the morning, so you will have plenty of time for translating during the day.	Time zone. You are usually teaching from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. EST. They tend to overhire, so it may be a while before you start getting students.
Prep Time	Almost none!	None
Equipment	None	They may require you to have some toys and physical props.
Students	Usually children ages 3–12. Very cute!	If you don't get along with kids, it won't work.



Carlie Sitzman, CT is an ATA-certified German>English translator with over 10 years of experience as a freelance translator and technical writer. She has an MA in intercultural German studies from the University of Bayreuth in Germany, as well as a BA in German and an associate of applied science degree in design graphics engineering technology from Weber State University. csitzman@sitzmanaetranslations.com