

Language school hires people with diverse backgrounds

by Heidi Riley

Chameleon Language Centre (CLC) employs translators, interpreters, copy editors, and language instructors. The school opened in Charlottetown in April 2009 and offers translation, interpretation, and language classes.

The employees currently working with CLC have a wide variety of education backgrounds, including:

- BA in Social Science
- BA in English Literature and Translation diploma
- BSC in Water Quality Management
- Chartered Accountant
- Masters of Business Administration (MBA)
- MA in Medieval Studies and MA in Philosophy
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Printmaking and Open Studio

“What these people have in common is that they all speak two or three languages and have teaching or translation experience,” says **Annamaria Kiss**, manager of CLC. “When I hire someone, it’s not the type of degree they have that matters. It’s the experience that is important. As well, most have ESL (English as a Second Language) certification.”

Translation

In translation, documents are translated from one language to another. “At Chameleon, one person does the translation and a second proofreads it,” says Annamaria. “A team effort produces a much better quality translation.”

Interpretation

Interpreters verbally convert one language to another while the person is talking. This service is often in demand at international conferences and meetings.

Language instruction

The school offers classes taught by native speakers. “It’s a great advantage to learn from someone who has also learned a language,” says Annamaria. “They understand from personal experience how best to learn a new language and can pass that knowledge to their students.

“Spanish is the language most in demand by learners. Language instruction is also available in English, French, Japanese, Hebrew, Mandarin and biblical Greek.”



Annamaria Kiss opened Chameleon Language Centre a year ago. She has six part-time staff. Classes are held in the evenings at the Voluntary Resource Centre at 81 Prince Street in Charlottetown.

Hiring needs

“I am always looking for people with language skills and experience to grow my team,” says Annamaria. “As the business grows, I will need more people to teach, translate, or interpret. Even if I cannot promise immediate work I would like to make a list of contacts in case I need a substitute teacher or translator. Employment is on a contract basis.

“I know first-hand that it is not easy for newcomers to find employment. There are plenty of experienced and skilled individuals here on the Island who can provide such services. I would like to employ and contract anyone qualified and looking for such work.”

Jobs most in demand

“It is rare to find Spanish instructors on PEI, so I visited the UPEI Modern Languages Department and hired instructors who work there,” says Annamaria. “They are sessional lecturers who do not work full-time, year round at the university.”

Beginnings

Annamaria was born and raised in Hungary. She earned a BA in Social Sciences in the Netherlands and a Masters in Nationalism Studies in Hungary.

While at university, she met and married a fellow student from PEI. The couple moved to the Island four years ago. Annamaria found work on PEI as a substitute librarian with the public library system.

Self employment

“I really wanted to start a business, but I didn’t know what kind of business,” says Annamaria. For inspiration, she took a How to start your own business course with **ProfitLearn** at UPEI. Her mother-in-law is a translator and proofreader, and suggested that Annamaria start a business with her in mind as an employee. “I also heard that there was a need for more Spanish language instruction on PEI, so I combined those two ideas.”

Annamaria was eligible for the **Self Employ PEI program**, administered through **Skills PEI**, a division of the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning. The program assists individuals by providing financial support, business training and counselling during the development and implementation of their business plan. She also received a grant for marketing and consulting from **PEI Business Development**.

The business is growing. In addition to language classes, she has just won a contract with the provincial government to translate a guide for Newcomers into Spanish.

What’s in a name?

“I called my business Chameleon, because a chameleon can change colours to adapt to its environment, and we are flexible and adapt to our clients’ needs.”