



Independent Media Support Group, PLC
www.ims-media.com

Chloe
Live Subtitler, Sky News and Sport

While I had worked for various student publications at university, my commitment to journalism was patchy, and subordinate to my academic concerns. I am, however, a voracious consumer of current affairs and a wide variety of sports, particularly football. After a few months mining the *Media Guardian*, applying for anything that wasn't admin, sales or began "head of," I came upon this. It turned out to be exactly my kind of thing.

I create live subtitles for Sky News and Sky Sports, which requires me to be my own researcher and editor. The research has to be comprehensive enough that I'm prepared for anything that might reasonably come up in relation to the programme. On air, the objective is to produce easily comprehensible subtitles, which are simultaneously as comprehensive as possible and convey the tone of the piece. This constant editorial process has to take place in the space of a few seconds, so if several people are talking over each other on the screen, it has the potential for brain-melting intensity!

I find subtitling gratifying on both a personal and philanthropic level. It's obviously great getting paid to watch football, and being on television all the time without having to subject yourself to the glare of the camera. I relish the knowledge that my work enables the deaf and hard of hearing to enjoy live television, not to mention the 6 million other people who use subtitles on a regular basis.

It's true that the Sky newsroom is, physically, a five-minute walk away, but the humble subtitler is right in the thick of the action. It isn't enough to simply state that every day is different. As well as always knowing the weather forecast, in the past year I have covered everything from the Lebanon crisis to the Champions League final. There is also always the possibility that breaking news will sweep the unsuspecting, and naturally unprepared, subtitler into its wake.

University of Exeter, English 2004; Darwin, MPhil Medieval and Renaissance Literature 2005

Paul, Live Subtitler, Sky News and Sport

I came to IMS by chance, or perhaps by good fortune. Although my background had been in Maths and Sciences, at University I had become interested in Languages, and gained an undergraduate degree from SOAS in African Languages. Whilst interpreting and teaching seemed obvious career choices, I had become interested in linguistics, interested in language in general, and wanted a career in which I could be involved with words of whatever form, written or spoken. I had been to a number of uninspiring interviews at Marketing research companies and the like, when an automated email from the careers service arrived in my inbox and the subtitling job with IMS leapt out from amongst the adverts for Accountants and Bankers.

The key line was: 'Able to think in punctuation'.

When I read this, I knew the job could be for me. I am one of those people that is constantly noticing misplaced apostrophes in signs, the incorrect use of 'fewer' and 'less', that kind of thing. The job seemed to be a potent mix of editing and live TV, so I fired off a CV and a cover letter. Live programmes such as sports and the news cannot have their subtitles embedded before the show goes to air, as is normally the case. So IMS subtitle programmes using a technique called 'respeaking'. In short, the subtitler repeats what the presenters say into a microphone, which in turn feeds into a voice recognition programme. Many wires, computers and satellites later, your words appear on screens across the country as subtitles, and the deaf and hard of hearing have a chance to know what is going on in the football, why the referee made what appears to be the most stupid decision of the season.

At first it is all a bit daunting, two weeks are spent training the computer to understand your voice. You get a little taster of respeaking in the interview, but it is when you start that it all begins to make sense, and the software starts to write out what you are actually saying, and what seemed a bizarre practice becomes second nature, and soon your work is on live TV.

Another perk to the job is the hours. They might seem a little oppressive at first, three days of 12 hour shifts, but this is followed by three days off!!!! So after all the hard work you have a chance to recharge. And the 12 hour day is not so bad either, since you are only on air for half an hour at a time, and that half hour passes quickly since you are 'zoned in' on the job at hand.

In short, if you're a good editor, have a good speaking voice, sound grammar and spelling and have a genuine interest in sport, then this is a job worth considering.

Did I mention that the people you work with are great too? So long as people talking sport every now and then doesn't drive you crazy.....

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