Challenges in Translation and Language Industries
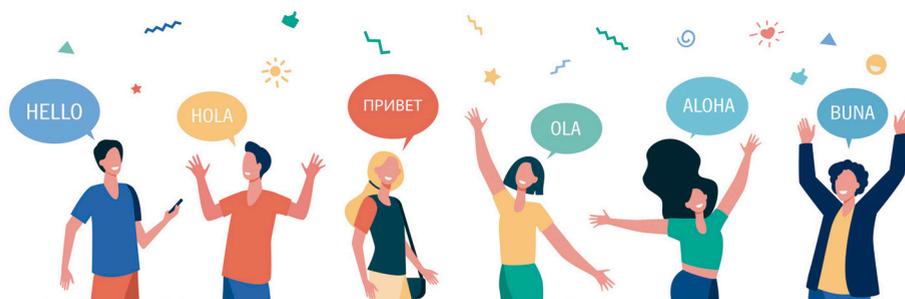
From Professional Skills to Market Needs

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Summary

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Introduction
Presentation of FOIL Project

FOIL Project
FOIL team

The language industry is one of the biggest and fastest growing industries nowadays. It comprises the translation industry, localisation, and even marketing and editing, and it has undergone significant transformations in recent years. These changes have been primarily driven by advancements in technology that have turned the translator into a multi-layered and key figure in the industry. As our world is becoming increasingly interconnected, the demand for translation and localization services has skyrocketed, creating new opportunities and challenges alike for both new and experienced professionals in the field who have to learn how to thrive in this new context. It is expected that this demand will keep growing exponentially in the near future thanks to globalisation and all the technological advances that we are witnessing. Bearing in mind the rapid development of the language industry we can confidently say that the scenario we have today is very different from the one we had five years ago; and it is also very different from the one that will have in five years.

In this era of rapid technological innovation, it is crucial for translators and other professionals to be able, and willing, to adapt to and embrace the latest technologies, tools and software that bring them the necessary change to improve their performance. It is crucial that professionals learn about and use those tools that constitute the best way to enhance their employability by meeting the evolving needs of global communication.

In the language industry, technology, globalization, and evolving communication needs continually shape the demands placed on professionals. The **FOIL project** [2020-1-ES-01-KA226-HE-096155] [1], funded with support from the European Commission, acknowledges that one-time courses or limited learning experiences are insufficient to maintain a stable and successful career in this fast-paced environment. Instead, professionals need to regularly update their knowledge and skills to remain efficient and provide high-quality work.

New technologies have revolutionized the way professionals approach the processes of translation, localisation, reviewing, publishing, and marketing, among many other disciplines. Nowadays processes are more efficient, accurate, and accessible partly thanks to the development of new technologies. Machine translation (MT) systems, computer-assisted translation tools (CAT), and other software have become an invaluable tool for handling large volumes of content and speeding up the translation process. Language industry professionals nowadays have the great advantage of counting on all the positive changes that the translation industry has undergone. However, technology advances can also be a risk for new and experienced professionals alike, since it has a great impact on employability. Translators and other professionals have been using computer-assisted translation tools for years, but the layout and functions that these tools offer have evolved immensely in the last few years, and it is expected that they will be developed even further, meaning that professionals will have to learn how to adapt to these changes. Otherwise, they might face the risk of professional self-marginalisation. These tools are now indispensable for the profession, and they range from translation memory systems to terminology management databases or even localisation software. They also facilitate consistency within a project, improve productivity and enable collaborative work.

Given that a great number of processes are automated, translation memories are a key component of the work of a translator, the revision process goes through a number of software and databases and most marketing platforms operate online nowadays, there is little doubt that there is a clear need for professionals to have a technological knowledge that goes beyond user level. Professionals in the language industry must know how to work with new technologies and how to learn about the continuous advances of translation technologies in order to provide good quality outputs, which is key for employability. Translators who can effectively integrate these tools into their workflow are highly sought after by translation agencies and companies alike, since they can leverage their skills to streamline their work processes, enhance translation quality, and deliver projects more efficiently, making them more competitive in the job market even as freelancers.

Professionals from both worlds, academia and the language industry, have joined forces to create a course and a manual that will serve as a guide for young professionals who want to enter the job market, and it will be helpful as well for experienced professionals who want to update and hone their skills, and learn more about the direction that the language industry is taking. The main goal of the course and this manual is to provide an innovative training model to form professionals with an heterogeneous profile that adapts to the needs of the market nowadays and in the future, since it offers a market-based quality education.

In recent years, the traditional approach to education has seen a significant transformation, with the emergence of microcredentials gaining momentum. Microcredentials have become an essential component of professional development and skill recognition, and governments have recognized the significance of microcredentials in the modern educational landscape in response to the evolving needs of the workforce. Through

many initiatives, the European Union and the Spanish Government are both supporting the conception of new educational plans that include these new microcredentials and short courses to help people access the labour market. These newly developed plans emphasize the acquisition of microcredentials as a means to foster professional growth and adaptability in an ever-changing job market for both graduates and experienced professionals alike.

These concise, targeted learning programs allow individuals to acquire specific knowledge and competencies in a short period, making them an ideal choice for professionals seeking to enhance their translation skills. Moreover, employers are increasingly valuing specialized knowledge and practical skills over generalized degrees, and microcredentials provide tangible evidence of an individual's proficiency in a specific area, serving as a testament to their dedication and expertise. By completing microcredentials courses one can effectively improve their language proficiency and translation capabilities, showcasing their employability to potential employers, gaining a competitive edge in the job market.

These materials are all part of the FOIL initiative, carried out as an international and collaborative project within several language industry professionals.

The FOIL initiative (Formación Online para las Industrias de la Lengua – Online Training for Language Industries) is a project founded with support from the European Commission through a KA226 Erasmus+ initiative (2020-1ES01-KA226-HE-096155). Through this project, an international team was assembled, with professionals from both academia and the language industry market, professionals with years of experience and a deep knowledge about the necessary skills for a competitive market and what formation should future professionals get. These collaborators come from different backgrounds and countries, and each of them provides essential knowledge on the different topics that are covered in the several modules of both the course and the manual.

To present all the material there are two intellectual outputs. Firstly an open-access online modular course with seven modules, being modules 5, 6, and 7 modules that cover the basic information about market niches, professional associations, and taxes among other topics; everything presented from a perspective that presents the specificities of the markets and the national language industries in Spain, France, and Greece respectively. All these modules have been created by professionals with a vast experience in their countries and the international arena, who know the commercial needs of their countries.

Part of the materials developed and presented online are videos, which offer an overview of each of the units contained in the modules. Moreover, there are other materials that can be downloaded, such as infographics, and will help understand the most important points in each unit.

At the end of each of the modules, there is a 10-questions quiz with random questions, that covers every unit in the module and will test the understanding of the materials and the capacity of analysis of the reader.

The IO2, being the manual, showcases the same modules, containing the same number of units and same topics covered. However, it presents a more synthetic version of the information presented in the online course.

In the case of the IO2, the evaluation for each module is composed by a quiz, which covers every unit in the module, as well as a self-assessment question to be answered after the study of the modules and deep research on the topic.

Each of the units offers a wide range of tool promoting autonomous learning strategies for professionals to be able to apply all the knowledge contained in the course in the future by adapting themselves to new technologies and needs.

The FOIL project presents an innovative, modern, and flexible education model, offering different educational proposals developed by collaborators and professionals working in the language industries and academia. The basic training proposal of this initiative, the manual and the modular online course aim at bridging the gap between the training offered in higher education and the current demands of language industries (Arnáiz Uzquiza, V. & Ortego Antón, T., 2023).

The course has been created to enhance the educational experience of the students who want to break into the market, and of experienced professionals who might want to hone their skills; offering a new, industry-oriented, and research-based quality qualification. The background idea for this course stems from the recognition that the demands and requirements of the language industry in general, translation and localisation in particular, are constantly evolving due to advancements in technology, globalization, and cultural shifts, which means that traditional educational models may struggle to keep pace with these changes. To bridge this gap, the FOIL project searches to align the educational offerings and materials with the current demands of the language industries, which involves incorporating new technologies, introducing specialized courses, providing industry-specific training, and fostering partnerships with relevant organizations and professionals. This way, students will have the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a very dynamic and heterogeneous language industry.

The FOIL project aims at delivering a high-quality market-based education, but not only addressed to new professionals. Upskilling and reskilling are part of the long-life learning experience. Due to the fast pace of the changes, one-time courses and limited learning experiences are not enough to be able to thrive as a professional and guarantee a stable career; professionals should update their knowledge and skills regularly in order to work in an efficient way and to provide good quality work.

In this specific case, in the language industry, reskilling refers to the process of acquiring new skills or upgrading existing ones to adapt to the new translation, localisation, and management technologies as well as to the changing demands and trends in the field. The FOIL project recognizes the importance of reskilling as part of a lifelong learning experience for professionals in the language industry.

Reskilling can take various forms within the language industry. It may involve learning new technologies and tools used in translation, localization, or interpreting, such as

machine translation systems, computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, or specialized software. Additionally, professionals may need to develop expertise in specific domains or industries to meet the demands of specialized translation projects.

Upskilling, on the other hand, refers to enhancing existing skills, and it is important to accept that it is also crucial in the language industry. For instance, language professionals may need to improve their language proficiency, deepen their cultural knowledge, refine their writing or speaking skills, expand their subject matter expertise, learn about a new software, or a new feature of an existing tool.

Both reskilling and upskilling are essential components of the FOIL project's approach to empower language professionals in the face of rapidly changing industry dynamics. By encouraging continuous learning and providing opportunities for acquiring new skills and knowledge, the project aims to ensure professionals can thrive, maintain an efficient workflow, and deliver high-quality work in the language industry. Long-life learning is part of a successful career, and FOIL project wants to boost this continuous education and make it available for a wider audience.

And part of that efforts is its format; since the FOIL initiative is composed by an online course and a printed manual, it offers the possibility to study the course at an appropriate but also adapted pace, as well as to complete this course in a virtual way. This means that the course is open to a wider audience. There are four main groups targeted by this industry-oriented initiative:

Firstly, it seeks to bridge the gap between newly graduated professionals and the language industry market, helping them to understand the market, the options available, and the skills that are necessary to develop in order to be a good professional. One important aspect of the FOIL initiative is its inclusivity. Being a long-distance education programme that everyone can finish at their own pace, it is available for caregivers, people with limited availability and/or resources, and people at risk of social exclusion due to the new realities brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this group, another important group targeted by this initiative who could benefit from its online format, is the population of rural remote areas who do not have the option to travel or move to pursue their higher education.

Secondly it also seeks to help experienced professionals adapt to new technologies and the advances of globalisation, since the language industry changes continuously at a very fast pace and there are many new tools to adapt to and skills to develop.

Thirdly, Language service providers (LSP) could benefit from this course, by using its teachings and new information to improve not only the performance but also the abilities of their employees.

And finally, this course is also intended for trainers and professionals in academia and other sectors with limited resources who want to help with the education and reintegration of professionals in the field.

The FOIL project follows an inductive methodology based on an AGILE method, with working packages composed by different types of materials that the student can

use to work at their own pace to make the work more efficient. The course is divided in seven modules, being the last three of them local modules that target specific audiences from Spain, France, and Greece.

Each module addresses one of the topics what have been considered the main pillars of the language industry: skills for the job market, translation environment tools, project management, content management, and the language industry from a global and a national perspective.

The manual starts with a chapter-module, *Skills for the job market*, that will help everyone understand the market and the industry, which is much more than just new software, companies, and freelancers. Globalization and new technologies have been a great boost for the industry, but they have also turned it into a more complex network of clients and service providers who now have to interact with people from all over the world, from different cultures, in different languages, and for different purposes. Therefore, it is important to know how to present oneself as a professional and interact with the rest of the stakeholders, since it is a crucial part of the industry and will, in some cases, determine the success of the professionals.

Professionals can be present as many different figures: freelance translators, company translators, content creators, project managers, terminologists… just to mention a few of the many roles available for professionals in the language industry. It is important to know the details of what each role entails and its position within the industry, as well as their fiscal regimes.

There are also many different disciplines within the industry, be it localisation, sworn translation, subtitling, literary translation, legal translation… just to mention a few. And each of them must have certain skills that are key to deliver good results, therefore the education that professionals receive is key. Any language industry-related course and update is of great help for any professional regardless of their role.

As it has been mentioned before, new technology is at the centre of innovation in the language industry, and every process, be it during translation, project management, revision, or in any other discipline; is either automated, or, in other cases, there are new apps and software available that help professionals work in a more efficient way. The second chapter-module, *Translation environment tools*, focuses on those new technologies, tools and methods. Presenting an overview of corpora, focusing on the different types and compilation processes; text mining, its importance and steps; post-editing and the tools available in the market; and CAT tools in general, among other topics. Even though most translation programmes nowadays include technology instruction and CAT tools education, technology evolves fairly quickly, that is why the units presented in this module present the basic knowledge related to technologies in a balanced way that will allow the learner, using that knowledge, to be able to adapt to future needs as technology keeps evolving.

Next, in the third chapter-module, *Project Management*, the main theme revolves around management and standards, which are basic pillars of any professional's work.

The market-based research covers project management and its general processes, project documentation being an essential part of it; project-related productivity and the different ways in which it can be measured are also covered, as well as quality management, quality control, and process indicators that will be personalised metrics to asses one's work. The work of a professional always needs to meet the standards of the client, the industry, and self-imposed standards; and, to make sure that a quality product is always delivered, there are many indicators, processes, and tools that will help measure the accuracy and quality of an assignment. Many of these standards, metrics, and processes are taught in this module, which divides quality and management in several units.

Apart from the internal, ethical, and effective communication aspect within the industry mentioned above, interacting with other stakeholders such as regular clients or even possible future clients and partners is one the aspects that is covered by marketing and branding. The fourth chapter-module, *Content Management*, covers content in general; starting by all the different ways in which professionals can advertise their services and reach a greater base of clients, specialising in a particular niche at the same time. Branding, marketing, SEO & SEM are the main units that will help create a market-adapted communication and advertising strategy for freelancers and companies. However, this module covers as well other skills that are required from any professional, since translators nowadays assume several roles in a single project. This module also presents content creation, desktop publishing, revision, review, and proofreading as well. Proofreading, revision, and review, seem to go hand in hand, and even one single person can assume various of these roles in one single project. Nevertheless, this module shows the strong differences between them, and what do each of them do in the different stages of a project.

The fifth chapter-module, *Skills to Join the Market*, is special in its composition and content. The fifth online module – Local Module – is a trifold structure which presents a general overview of the global and the Spanish, French, and Greek market and language industries. These modules showcase the same structure and cover the same topics, only from a different national perspective each of them. The fifth module covers the Spanish language industry, the sixth the French one, and the last one, the seventh module, presents Greece's specificities. Each unit within these modules contains specific information related to the language industries of each of these countries from tax regimes, to market niches, or accounting to name but a few. The chapter-module that covers these contents provides a general overview on the main common issues on the online contents.

The closing chapter in this manual, *Challenges in Translation and Language Industries. Looking back, and ahead*, provides a general overview of the FOIL project. Covering the main contents of the modular platform together with a thorough reflection on current and future market needs, authors reflect on the role of technology in the age of Artificial Intelligence, and its effect on the professional practice.

Challenges in Translation and Language Industries presents the objectives and outcomes of the Erasmus+ FOIL Project *(Formación Online para las Industrias del Lenguaje-Online Training for the Language Industries)*, an initiative designed to meet the changing demands of the language industry. In a context marked by globalization and technological innovation —including CAT tools, machine translation, and localization software— the profession increasingly requires ongoing training and reskilling.

The present volume addresses these needs by offering resources that bridge the gap between academic education and professional practice. Focusing on essential areas such as translation technologies, project and content management, and the analysis of market requirements, while also reflecting on how translators can position themselves in a highly competitive environment.

Emphasizing innovation, adaptability, and lifelong learning, the book provides both theoretical insights and practical tools. It aims to provide future and current professionals with the skills and strategies necessary to succeed in an industry shaped by automation, artificial intelligence, and global communication.

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