Backing the Translators and Language Professionals: Associations' Roles in an AI-Driven Industry

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Abstract

This research report aims to investigate how professional language associations are both framing and responding to the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) on the translation and interpreting industry. This research project examined documents and audiovisual sources from 17 different professional language associations. The main findings suggest that professional language associations are framing the introduction of GenAI as a collaboration between human professionals and AI. However, many associations in this report are advocating and implementing initiatives within their organisations to ensure that translation remains a human-centred profession. Additionally, this report found that the main differences in responses across associations was due to the size of the associations. Therefore, this research report finds that professional associations are responding to the impact of GenAI by slowly integrating it to the industry however there is more advocacy remaining for associations to undertake.

Introduction

The popularity of Gen AI has grown rapidly since the release of ChatGPT (Madzik et al., 2025, p.1), an AI chatbot powered by large language models, in November 2022 (Open AI, 2022). However, language professionals have known and used AI-powered neural machine translation (NMT) in professional language services since the late 2010s (AIIC Interpreters, 2021). Both NMT and GenAI require a significant amount of data for training and deep learning however their capabilities differ. While NMT was created specifically for translation and was trained using bilingual text pairs (Comic, 2025), GenAI can translate, interpret as well as predict text (Chen, 2024, p.1). The widespread adoption of GenAI in public life as well as within the industry has led to a growing concern for language professionals over data privacy (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, 2025, p.21), environmental costs (Riemland, 2025), and the fear that it will displace jobs (Vulser, 2025).

Professional language associations are organisations that represent the interests of their members, whether they be practicing language professionals or language service companies. Their role is to offer professional certification, the opportunity to network with other language professionals and to hold up ethical and professional standards within the industry as a whole (Rosado, 2023) on a global, national or regional basis. In relation to GenAI, they are expected to train and inform their members of recent tools and developments in technology as well as advocate for their members by collaborating with government agencies to campaign for legal

changes concerning AI or technology companies to create solutions for the problems that language professionals face due to GenAI.

While previous research concerning different AI technologies and the impact of AI in translation and interpretation has been completed (Ginel, 2025), (Mohamed et al., 2025), research that specifically focuses on the role of language associations, is sparse. Available existing research finds that the responsibility of translation associations to take action is increasing at a time when the influence of GenAI is growing. It also finds that professional language associations have shown that they are resilient to the changes that AI has brought (Cornelius, 2025). However, this review is a more general summary of translation associations and the factors that impact them rather than an in-depth research on their role in relation to GenAI specifically. It is important to investigate this research topic in order to clarify and show to the public what exactly the role of professional associations are in a rapidly changing industry.

Therefore, this report will examine how professional language associations frame and respond to the impact of GenAI on their profession. This research draws on publicly available sources from 17 different professional associations across North America, Europe and Asia and analyses the concrete initiatives and advocacy that they have undertaken as well as the geographical differences in responses across associations.

Within this research, analyses is shaped around five research questions, focusing on how professional associations frame the impact of GenAI, how they attempt to shape Gen AI-related policies that affect their profession, what concrete initiatives they have implemented to prepare for GenAI related changes, how the identities and competencies of language professionals are changing as a result of AI and how responses differ between associations.

Methodology

Research Design

For this research project, the data comprised of 52 publicly available sources that focused on the role of professional associations and their response to developments in GenAI. The collected data included documents published by associations, articles posted by the associations' own blogs and social media posts as well as audiovisual data including past webinar sessions and speeches. Collecting publicly available data, rather than obtaining primary data, was more appropriate for the aims of this project because the focus of the project was to research how the professional associations frame the impact of AI and what actions they take to respond. If the data comprised of sources which were only available to members, then language professionals who do not belong to an association or people who are not

practicioners in the field however still may be interested would not be able to access continuously developing Gen AI-related tools and education. This research project employed a qualitative analysis method to analyse the collected data where sources which had the relevant information to the questions above were taken note of and the information available across different types of language associations were compared.

Data Collection

The professional language associations that were included in this research project were chosen from a list provided by my supervisor. The list was arranged by broad to narrow geographical region; worldwide, North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific Region. It included language associations which represented a variety of interests ranging from translation, interpretation as well as localization and language service companies as well as individual language professionals. The results are comprised from data from 17 different associations. The number of sources corresponding to each region investigated are summarised in a table below.

Region	No. of Associations	No. of Sources
International (no specific region)	3	13
North America	4	11
Europe	6	19
Asia-Pacific	4	9
Africa	0	0
South America	0	0
Middle East	0	0

From the list of associations, the sources that were thought to be relevant to the five research questions were chosen. During the research period, initially, sources that covered framing of AI or the impact of AI on the sector were identified. These sources were found from searching the professional associations' websites for any documents that explained the associations' position on GenAI as well as resource hubs. Following that, the search became narrower as sources that detailed specific concrete initiatives that professional associations had implemented were collected. Finally, sources which covered the attempts of professional associations to advocate for their members or shape policy were identified.

However, it is important to mention the constraints of this research. Since this research project only spanned the length of six weeks, associations which represented the regions of Africa, South America and the Middle East were unable to be included in this study. This has meant that the result of this research, while being internationally representative, it is not representative of some regions. In the future, if this research were to be undertaken in a longer period of time, then sources from language associations representing Africa, South America and

the Middle East would be included. Additionally, several associations such as the Japan Association of Translators (JAT), Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (AMTA) and Hong Kong Translation Society (HKTS) have less documentation and audiovisual data published compared to other associations in this research.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data was guided by the following five main research questions:

> How are professional T&I associations framing the impact of Gen AI and LLMs on the profession?
>
> Do associations (attempt to) participate in shaping Gen AI-related policies, standards, or regulations affecting translation/interpreting? If yes, how?
>
> What concrete initiatives have associations implemented to prepare their members for Gen AI-driven changes and what do these initiatives consist of in terms of contents and focus?
>
> What kinds of professional identities and competencies are being redefined as Gen AI becomes integrated into T&I work?
>
> How might supports or responses for Gen AI adaptation vary across regions, languages, or possibly association sizes?

To ensure that the methodology of this research project was consistent and easily replicable, a catalogue, in the form of a spreadsheet, was used to keep track of all sources and professional associations. Each association was also searched their position statement on GenAI, then the concrete initiatives they implemented within their association for their members and finally the examples of advocacy, if any, they undertook. All the sources found were recorded on the spreadsheet and analysed using the relevant question. Once all the data was collected, common initiatives or advocacy actions were identified, which will be discussed below.

Results

The results of this research will now be discussed below using the five research questions as guidance.

How are professional T&I associations framing the impact of Gen AI and LLMs on the profession?

Overall, professional associations frame the impact of GenAI as a collaboration, in the form of hybrid work within the language services sector. However, many professional associations

emphasise the role of human centeredness within hybrid work. Many associations also address the myth that AI will replace all human translators and interpreters in the future. They, instead, argue that human expertise and oversight is necessary in this profession and replacing language professionals in specialised settings such as courts has significant risks.

Specifically, this research question gives an idea of what the future of this sector will look like. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)'s past webinar session on 'Automated Speech Translation' argues that the benefits of introducing hybrid work into the language services sector is that it reduces cognitive load, the manual work, including translating captions, could be delegated to GenAI. This means that creative work could be done by the human interpreter and could lead to additional research (AIIC Interpreters, 2021). Similarly, the session on AI Interpreter Training emphasises that if there is a need for hybrid solutions within the language industry in the future, this will mean that the current training of translators and interpreters will currently need to include hybrid training (AIIC Interpreters, 2021).

There are some exceptions to the overall positive framing of GenAI within professional associations. The JAT "condemns" the use of GenAI in the translation of literature (PR Times, 2024). The FIT, in their Position Paper on the Use of AI in Interpreting, frame the impact of GenAI as a fear that the increase in the use of AI will lead to a loss of human skills and competence eventually leading to a lack of skills in professional translators as well as a decrease in working professional translators (International Federation of Translators, 2024). In contrast, the Translators Association of China (TAC) has stated that the language services industry should adopt GenAI led innovations since translation is an area where AI currently is good at (China.org.cn, 2026).

Do associations (attempt to) participate in shaping Gen AI-related policies, standards, or regulations affecting translation/interpreting? If yes, how?

Generally, some professional associations advocate for their members through legal channels or by collaborating with either government agencies or technology companies.

Specifically, some of the Gen AI-related policies and standards that professional associations have adopted include the FIT's consumer labels (International Federation of Translators, 2025, p.5). This makes sure that the consumer knows whether the translation was done by a professional translator or by a machine, therefore is labelled either Professionally Verified Translation or Unverified Translation respectively. This is to ensure that consumers should be educated on the difference between raw machine output and human expertise. Additionally, the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) has come up with the concept of 'slow translation' which is to prioritise quality over quantity in translation (Institute of Translation and Interpreting, 2024). This is to help keep artistry as well as celebrating the diversity of histories

of languages. They have created a manifesto for Slow Translation which shapes the way that language professionals translate in the age of AI.

In terms of advocacy, the American Translators Association (ATA) is a part of the independent SAFE-AI taskforce (Stakeholders Advocating for Fair and Ethical AI in Interpreting Task Force) (Melby, 2024). This taskforce is a collaboration between language professionals in the hearing and Deaf communities and practitioners. The ATA is also responding to legislators, in Wisconsin, who are proposing to replace expert interpreters in court with AI (American Translators Association, 2025). The FIT has collaborated the United Nations to create a special framework for the language sector called FIRST (foresight, innovation, resilience, skills and teamwork) (Elbaz, 2025). Additionally, the French Society of Translators (SFT), although not formally, is warning educators and governmental organisations, which oversee the educational curriculum, of the importance of training future translators and interpreters (Société Française des Traducteurs, 2024, p.8). They also demand the government give priority to human language services and withhold funding for AI based services (p.6). The Association of Translation Companies (ATC) has given evidence to UK Government's committee about translation and interpretation services in courts. They say that "The ATC is available, in collaboration with its technology partners, to carry out further context-based, comprehensive risk assessments and testing, should the Committee wish to commission further work on insights into this area." (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2024, p.7). The European Union of Associations of Translation Companies (EUATC) has collaborated with the EU Commission (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies, 2023) as well as language industry expert group LIND which represents the EUATC's interests (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies, no date). They have also collaborated with technology companies which support language service companies (LSCs) to create and adapt to tech based, AI enabled translation services (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies, 2026).

What concrete initiatives have associations implemented to prepare their members for Gen AI-driven changes and what do these initiatives consist of in terms of contents and focus?

In terms of concrete initiatives, many associations include upholding values and standards as preparing their members for Gen-AI and the wider language services industry and have published documents accordingly. For example, the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CiOL) and the ITI jointly collaborated to respond to the UK government's consultation on GenAI in relation to translation and said that professional translators need transparency and data protection in training scenarios and there needs to be regulations developed to protect translations for copyright (Institute of Translation and Interpreting, 2025). However, the extent to which the above can be considered concrete initiatives is questionable. An example worth noting is that

the ATA has no GenAI related information in their Code of Ethics and it was last updated in 2022, around the rise of GenAI (American Translators Association, 2022).

Other concrete initiatives include creating Gen-AI focused committees within their organisations. Examples include the European Language Industry Association (ELIA)'s AI committee that informs their members through 'learning opportunities' such as webinars and resources (European Language Industry Association, no date) and the TAC's standardization committee which aims to create better standards for Gen AI use within the language services sector (Translators Association of China, 2026). The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) also has a special interest group on Gen AI use cases that discuss the applications of AI in the language sector (Globalization and Localization Association, no date). Another concrete initiative is resource hubs on associations' websites for their members. For example, GALA has a resource center on AI-powered localization that includes recordings of webinars such as 'AI Multimedia Localization: Challenges and Chances' available only to members (Globalization and Localization Association, no date) and the AIIC has created an Artificial Intelligence Workstream platform where members can go and view documents that can help them make decisions over whether they should use GenAI (International Association of Conference Interpreters, no date).

Many associations also have implemented training and education as a concrete initiative for their members however it is not compulsory for members to join webinars or undertake training. For example, GALA runs the GALA Academy which provides online training quarterly on topics such as 'AI-powered localization and quality evaluation' however while it is free for members, it requires payment for non-members (Globalization and Localization Association, no date). Similarly, the EUATC has collaborated with other associations such as the ALC to create a training program 'Reclaim the Future 4.0 – AI Upskilling for Language Services' for SME language service companies (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies, 2026) and TAC has training programs for the 'Master of Translation and Interpreting' faculty and continuously updates the teaching curriculum (Translators Association of China, 2026).

Some unique concrete initiatives include the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)'s creation of a human supervision scale, for the use of both translation and interpretation services, to demonstrate to the client how much human oversight was present during the process (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, 2025, p.29). The Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec (OTTIAQ) has a legal mandate to protect the public from the risks of GenAI and fulfils this by having high standards for their language professionals and informing the public of the limitations of AI (Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec, 2025). TAC has also launched an initiative called the 'Four Translation Projects' which includes training, research hubs and networks and

has also partnered with technology companies to create AI translation research and development bases (Translators Association of China, 2025).

What kinds of professional identities and competencies are being redefined as Gen AI becomes integrated into T&I work?

First focusing on identities, there is a general pattern that professional translators and interpreters will remain as translators and interpreters. For example, the FIT is stating that although human translators and interpreters will remain, GenAI will be integrated into their work since it complements their work and increases efficiency (International Federation of Translators, 2025, p.4). In addition to their unchanging identity as professional translators and interpreters, some professional associations are adding to their identities. For example, TAC's president maintains the position that translators should also act as cross-cultural communications, quality decision makers and workflow managers (Translators Association of China, 2026). A blog post by the FIT also argues that increasingly different job profiles are being hired such as language technology specialists or lawyer linguists (Elbaz, 2025). This suggests that translators and interpreters are being maintained rather than replaced and instead a wider range of skills are becoming necessary within the language services sector in order to adapt to GenAI.

Focusing on competence, many professional associations are echoing the idea that the most specialised and skilled language professionals will be the most in demand in the future since AI will be unable to replace human expertise in high-stake, high-risk situations (Chartered Institute of Linguists (2025), American Translators Association (2025)). Human expertise is also necessary to validate any raw machine output or AI generated content and to be transparent about any service they provide to clients (American Translators Association (2025), International Association of Conference Interpreters (no date)). Additionally, the FIT contends that if language professionals undertake post-editing or any other related skill, then they would need extra qualifications and would not automatically become post-editors (International Federation of Translators, 2021). According to the ELIA, the additional training language professionals would need to undertake would be practical and specific rather than structured (European Language Industry Association, 2025).

How might supports or responses for Gen AI adaptation vary across regions, languages, or possibly association sizes?

Internationally, there is not a lot of difference in responses to GenAI adaptation. Many professional associations, which represent both international members as well as national members, tend to echo the same narratives towards GenAI as well as undertake the same initiatives. There are some associations which have different initiatives or advocates using

different methods however it is fair to assume that this is not due to national or regional differences. However, one notable exception was that out of all professional associations examined in this research, the TAC had the most positive framing of GenAI and the JAT had the most negative framing of AI.

For languages, only AUSIT states that there will be an algorithmic bias towards major world languages such as English leading to a lack of representation of the 350+ languages in Australia in GenAI technology (AUSIT, 2025, p.3). They also contend that AI technology is limited for sign language and there has been no technology developed for Australian Sign Language (p.3). In terms of patterns, the UK associations, ITI and CiOL both state that the most skilled language professionals will be in demand in the future (Institute of Translation and Interpreting (no date), Chartered Institute of Linguists (no date)).

In terms of association sizes, the least content from the 17 associations was available from the EUATC, SFT, GALA, JAT and HKTS. This suggests that professional associations which represent a single region or nation or specialization tend to publish the least content on GenAI and its impact on the language services sector. The associations which had the most amount of publicly available content were the FIT, AIIC, ITI and the ATA. This suggests that the associations which represented the biggest regions had the most content available on AI. This research also found that professional associations which represented translation or interpreting companies had less publicly available source than associations which represented individual members.

Conclusion

This research project investigated the role of professional associations in responding to the impact of GenAI in the language services industry. Specifically, it aimed to investigate whether professional associations advocated or undertook initiative to help prepare their members for a changing industry. This research exclusively examined publicly available content in order to determine what type of and how much AI-related content is available to non-professionals.

This research found that professional associations frame the impact of GenAI as a transformation that will have to be adopted into the industry. They want language professionals to collaborate with GenAI in a hybrid work placement while still providing human-centred language services. In order for this to happen, professional associations are providing additional training as well as resource hubs to help members learn more about GenAI use in language services and are collaborating with government agencies as well as technology companies to regulate and innovate translation and interpretation related GenAI products. Publicly available data on advocacy and initiatives across professional associations mainly differ due to association sizes.

The results of this research suggest that professional associations, especially associations which span internationally and represent a larger number of members, are taking action to respond to the impact on GenAI on the industry. They are increasingly advocating for their members however there is considerable further advocacy remaining that associations should undertake particularly in legislation and policy. This research also demonstrates the significance of integrating AI into the translation and interpretation industry and into the daily work of language professionals.

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