

ITI Artificial Intelligence Working Group

Phase 1 Report to the Board

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Date: 3 September 2024

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Format	5
3	Summary.....	6

1 Introduction

In September 2023, ITI's Board produced a scoping document as a prelude to creation of an AI Working Group.

The scoping document began:

Background and purpose

As a professional body for translators and interpreters, it is appropriate for the Board to ensure that it is well informed about how current and future technological developments may impact the language services professions. Although we are still learning about its potential and its risks, it is already clear that generative AI (genAI) will influence all aspects of our lives. While it is not appropriate for ITI to engage with discussions about genAI at the level of society-wide impact (in accordance with our Articles of Association), the Board has stated that this topic forms part of ITI's current strategic priorities and we will take policy action where appropriate. The Board also believes that ITI has a role to play in formulating a pathway to help ITI members future-proof their career. This includes helping members to develop the skills that AI can't master, and encouraging them to look creatively at how they can adapt their business model and market their valuable skills.

ITI agrees to conduct the following actions:

- Continue to champion the value of human translators and interpreters*
- Ensure that the Board has access to knowledge and experience to support informed decision-making re ITI policy and actions*
- Involve ITI members in capturing ideas, knowledge and good practice through open meetings etc.*
- Keep abreast of developments and share our understanding with ITI members as far as possible and within ITI capacity / resources*
- Support ITI members to learn about genAI tools so that they can make their own decisions about how to use them to enhance and future-proof their businesses*
- Seek out opportunities to collaborate with other organisations on shared initiatives in this policy area*

The Board has also agreed to convene a Working Group on genAI. This document forms the Terms of Reference for that group.

Objectives

The Board has agreed that the AI Working Group will have the following objectives:

- 1. Support ITI staff to gather ITI member insights on their understanding and use of genAI and associated technologies (e.g. Pulse surveys, opening meetings, regular discussion forum).*
- 2. Define the meaning of genAI in relation to professional language services and create a glossary of terminology to support ITI members' understanding.*

3. *Support ITI staff to curate and update the AI section of the ITI Knowledge Hub by identifying key sources of guidance and information which might benefit ITI members.*
4. *Develop a library of use case examples that demonstrate when AI tools might and might not be appropriate.*
5. *Engage with higher education providers to understand how T&I training is changing in response to the evolution of genAI and build a picture of the skills needed by future practitioners.*
6. *Suggest potential topics for genAI-related ITI training sessions that can be delivered through the proposed Learning Management System or webinars.*
7. *Provide advice to ITI staff on the potential to respond to Government policy consultations on genAI and language services-related topics.*
8. *Collaborate with research institutions working on the topic of genAI including participating in research and disseminating research findings.*

The ITI Board had already identified a number of key individuals whom it wished to approach about joining the working group. Some were naturally unavailable and others were added to the list in consultation with the Chair of the group, but the eventual composition was as follows:

- Iwan Davies FITI (Chair) (ID)
- Professor Lynne Bowker (LB)
- Professor Sabine Braun (SB)
- Claudio Fantinuoli (CF) (resigned Jan 2024)
- Stefano Ghazzali (SG)
- Ramon Inglada (RI)
- Katie McGill (KMcG)
- Terence Lewis (TL)
- Paul Ratcliffe (PR)
- Sara Crofts (SC)

The first meeting of the Working Group took place on 24 November 2023.

2 Format

At the first meeting of the Working Group, the Chair presented a proposal for approaching the very broad remit.

The Working Group agreed to split its initial research task into separate sections for translation (professional and non-professional), interpreting (professional and non-professional), education and training, policy. It was agreed that at each subsequent meeting, there would be a presentation on an aspect of AI given by the expert(s) in that area, followed by an opportunity for Q&A and discussion. The findings from each meeting would flow into this report.

The meetings (using Zoom) were arranged as follows:

- 30 January 2024: Use of AI for translation by professional linguists: TL
- 26 February 2024: Use of AI for interpreting by professional linguists and non-professionals: CF and SB
- 22 March 2024: Use of AI for translation by non-professionals: LB and KM
- 22 April 2024: Meaning of AI for T&I training: RI
- TBC: Debate around AI for policymaking: SC and PR

3 Summary

AI and genAI in particular are moving incredibly quickly. Keeping up with the pace of development is a challenge to all of us, whether we're translation or interpreting professionals, educators, professional associations, clients or just interested users. The AI Working Group has identified a number of key themes that could be addressed to support a response in this environment.

1. Focus on risk and liability. Quality is subjective and difficult for clients to assess or understand. The effects of quality, whether good or bad, can be more easily explained and comprehended. A risk-based approach, modelled on how companies approach other technologies from a risk perspective, could help illustrate and map out a sample workflow for choosing translation and interpreting strategies.
2. To understand what happens with AI for translation and interpreting, users must first understand what translation and interpreting actually are. Outside of our industry (and in some cases not very far outside it), there is a general lack of understanding for translation and interpreting of any kind. ITI should look to build on outreach to showcase what good translation looks like before exploring scenarios for MT/AI use cases
3. Translators and interpreters as individual professionals have to engage. Their clients are going to use AI whether they like it or not, so a head-in-the-sand approach will not work.
4. When it comes to training people in the use of AI tools for translation and interpreting, the core skills will always be necessary. It is more important than ever to focus on the translation brief, research, critical evaluation, etc. Even prompting has to start with knowledge and understanding of the translation brief. This is a learning for all in the industry, especially LSPs, where streamlined processes often no longer have room for much in the way of briefing.
5. AI interpreting is further away currently, and there is uncertainty about the development of AI supporting tools for interpreters because of cost/benefit to clients. There is a danger that good and useful efforts now will be discarded due to a focus on speech-to- speech.
6. Ethics in genAI. The EU AI Act is going to present guidance but how might this affect the UK?