The Certified Localisation Professional (CLP)

Reinhard Schäler
Localisation Research Centre (LRC)
Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, University of Limerick, Ireland
www.localisation.ie
TILP – The Institute of Localisation Professinals
www.tilponline.org

Reinhard.Schaler@ul.ie

Abstract

The Institute of Localisation Professionals (TILP) was established in 2002 as a non-profit organisation and in 2003 merged with the US-based Professional Association for Localization (PAL). TILP's objective is to develop professional practices in localisation globally. TILP is owned by its individual members. It coordinates a number of regional chapters in Europe, North America, Latin America and Asia.

The Certified Localisation Professional Programme (CLP) was launched by TILP in September 2004 and provides professional certification to individuals working in a variety of professions in localisation, among them project managers, engineers, testers, internationalisation specialists, and linguists.

This article will outline the CLP programme and is aimed at course providers interested in offering TILP accredited courses, employers planning to make CLP certification a requirement for future employees, and individual professionals planning to develop their professional career.

Background

The localisation industry emerged in the mid nineteen eighties in Europe as the provider of services to US-based digital content developers who wanted to sell into Europe and, therefore, had to linguistically and culturally adapt their products to the requirements of the emerging European markets.

Companies like Wordperfect and Lotus Development were among the first IT companies to set up large-scale localisation operations in Ireland, which soon responded with the establishment of a large number of dedicated service providers. Softrans, which later became Softrans-Berlitz, then Berlitz and, more recently, Bowne Global Solutions, set the trend. Its success encouraged many, more traditional translation agencies to follow and venture into the world of high-tech digital content adaptation.

From the very beginning, the individuals driving the development of this industry were business people teaming up with translation and software engineering professionals.

When they looked for employees for their newly established businesses, they could not rely on a pool of well-trained and educated localisers. There were no courses where potential localisers could train and acquire the necessary skills. Training took place largely on the job. Consequently, employees were recruited mainly from among translation professionals.

In the early days of localisation, at least some degree of language and translation skills were a must; an interest in computing was a requirement; engineering expertise was an added bonus.

Surprisingly, it took the best part of ten years for professional training providers to realise that they were losing out on a real opportunity. It was not until the mid-nineties that some companies, like Softrans-Berlitz, ETP, the Localisation Institute, and a number of third-level institutes, like Austin Community College, the University of Washington and the University of Limerick, developed course programmes responding directly to the needs of the localisation industry.

Today, the education and training of future localisation professionals takes place mainly in colleges and universities. While there are commercial course providers, these focus on short-term, highly focused and costly training sessions rather than on extended and affordable course programmes.

A rapidly growing number of these third-level institutes teaching localisation-related courses are now organised in the Localisation Training, Teaching and Research Network (LttN) operating under the umbrella of The Institute of Localisation Professionals (TILP).

The latest addition to the localisation course scenario are eLearning courses, offered by a number of providers, the most successful probably being the courses now offered by the Localisation Research Centre (LRC) at the University of Limerick (www.localisation.ie).

When efforts were initiated by the LRC in 1998 to bring experts from the localisation industry and the educational arena together to define the Certified Localisation Professional (CLP) programme, there was much scepticism.

How could skills, training and certification be defined in an industry where *the only constant is change, where each new project is different from the previous one, and where each employer has different job specifications and skills requirements?*

Benefits for the stakeholders

The initial CLP project was developed at the end of the nineteen nineties in an EU-funded project coordinated by the LRC.

Despite their initial scepticism, nineteen IT companies[1], six training providers[2] and six universities[3] worked together over a period of two years on CLP which was coordinated by the LRC[4] and funded by the European Union's ADAPT initiative

The main objectives of the CLP project were:

---

[1] Software and IT companies included: Alpnet, Apple Computer Ltd., Aslan LS, Bowne Global, Corel, ITP, Lionbridge, Lionet Technologies, Lotus, Microsoft, The Microworkshop, Netscape, Nortel, Oracle, SDL, Sun Microsystems, Symantec, Visio, VistaTEC.

[2] Training providers included: Berlitz, CATT, DLG, ETP, FÁS, Hi Tech.

[3] Universities and third level colleges included: University College Dublin, University of Limerick, Dublin City University, University of Brighton, Cork Institute of Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

[4] The project manager of the ADAPT-funded CLP project (A-1997-Irl-551) was Helen Wybrants. The LRC was located at University College Dublin for the most part of this project. It later moved to the University of Limerick.

- to develop a profile of jobs in the software localisation industry;
- to define the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out localisation work (activities, tasks etc.) at various levels of performance;
- to develop outline curricula to support the transfer of the relevant knowledge and skills associated with each localisation domain;
- to develop and implement 'pilot' trainee assessment programs;
- to develop and 'trial' an on-line assessment system.

At the outset, the following occupation centres were identified and prioritised:

- quality assurance localisation engineer;
- software localisation engineer;
- localisation project manager;
- linguist;
- internationalisation enabling specialist.

Over an eight month period these occupation centres were examined in detail and a first pass attempt was made to identify the key activities within each occupation, the pre-requisite core skills, the knowledge and qualifications required to access such an occupation, the on-the-job training available, and finally the appropriate career progression paths attainable.

This time-intensive cross-industry consultation process provided the project partnership with an indication of the macro needs and priorities of the industry. An in-depth needs analysis was then performed through a series of one-to-one interviews with business managers and technical specialists from specific companies.

A significant outcome of this phase of the CLP initiative was the recognition by the companies that despite their uniqueness and the uniqueness of their projects, there were clearly identifiable constants, both in the skills requirements for their employees and in the way they were conducting their business.

Over the lifetime of the project it became evident, that CLP carried significant benefits for all stakeholders with an interest in the development of professionalism in the localisation industry: the employers, the employees and the training providers.

Employers

There are significant benefits for employers as CLP addresses two of their major concerns in relation to staff recruitment and retention:

- Recruitment of staff
  In a multinational and multi-country staff recruitment context, professional certification implemented and driven by a recognised professional institute provides employers with a 'global yardstick' and an added criterion to screen job applications.

- Development and retention of staff
  Providing employees with a clearly mapped-out career path both within and across the different professions in localisation increases the interest and the motivation of employees to stay in the industry and to develop their career.

Employees

CLP offers a number of benefits for employees:

- Professional recognition
  Due to the lack of formal education in the field of localisation, many professionals have third-level qualifications, which generally are only indirectly related to localisation. In addition, academic qualifications only partially cover the skills and the experiences required in the profession and are almost always tied to a specific national educational system. Even within those systems, localisation is in most cases only a subject within a larger programme. CLP enhances the professional recognition of those certified while, at the same time, developing professionalism in the industry as a whole.

- Mobility
  As a globally operating professional certification system, CLP provides employees and localisation professionals with a qualification that is not tied to specific academic systems in a specific country but with a globally valid professional qualification that is agreed by the industry itself. Because of its global recognition, it will allow the transferability of qualifications and increase the mobility of professionals.

- Career development
  While many companies, and especially the large multinational organisations, have internal career development programmes and roadmaps, the different options of a career in localisation are not always evident. Employees can use CLP as a tool to plan their career – either within a particular profession in localisation or across different occupations. CLP answers questions such as *How far can I develop my career if I stay in testing?* or *Should I change into project management to get a higher salary?*

Training providers

Course providers also greatly benefit from CLP as it provides them with a number of very tangible business tools:

- Independently awarded, transferable certification
  One of the deciding factors for students to take up a course offering is the question of recognised, transferable qualifications that they can obtain upon the successful completion of a particular course. CLP, as an independent and professional programme, provides for such a set of qualifications.

- Differentiation
  In a market full of competing offerings where it is difficult for potential students to identify the right course, TILP accreditation provides course providers with a mark that will differentiate them from their competitors.

- Relevance
  Providers with an academic background are keen to emphasise the practical relevance of their offerings to prospective students. The CLP accreditation process ensures that practical aspects are covered in all courses. Students studying at accredited centres know that their tutors cover both academic and practical aspects of localisation.

The TILP Certified Localisation Professional

Background

The initial CLP project identified the commonality of the skills needed within the different professions in localisation. Goals still to be achieved following the end of the project, however, were:

- the establishment of an independent certification authority;
- the development of adequate training solutions.

The first issue was resolved with the establishment of The Institute of Localisation Professional (TILP) in 2002 with the aim to develop and launch CLP as the industry's internationally recognised, independent certification system.

> The TILP CLP Programme was launched at LRC '04, the 9th Annual International Localisation Conference organised by the Localisation Research Centre (LRC).

The second issue was resolved by the establishment of a system allowing TILP to accredit training providers offering course leading to CLP certification.

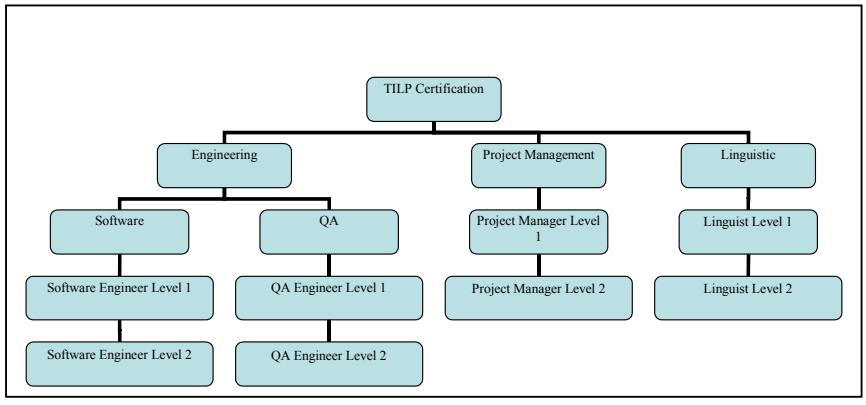
> Two organisations, one private[5] and one public[6], became the first TILP accredited Training providers.

Overview

TILP currently provides two levels of certification for each of the three professional streams within the localisation industry. The three streams are:

- engineering;
- project management;
- linguistic.

The engineering stream is further broken down into the software and quality engineering sub-streams. Each of these sub-streams is certified separately within TILP CLP because each requires a different skill set[7].



[5] The private company in question is Globalanswers (www.globalanswers.com).
[6] The public organisation in question is the University of Limerick (wwwul.ie and www.localisation.ie).
[7] However, for the purposes of TILP professional membership, engineering is considered as one profession.

CLP certification outline

TILP certifies individuals as having successfully completed a localisation course and accredits organisations offering courses leading to this certification. Both schemes are described in the following sections.

Individual certification

While TILP certifies individuals as having successfully completed a localisation course provided by a TILP accredited organisation, this process is separate from the admission as a professional member. (The successful completion of a TILP accredited course is a part-requirement for the admission as a professional member.)

Certificates are issued by TILP on the recommendation of the TILP accredited course provider. There will be no separate fee for issuing certificates to course participants. Course providers, upon receipt of the certificates requested, will pay the fees due to TILP for individual certificates. The fee for certificates includes associate membership of TILP for the calendar year in which the certificate was issued.

The following section describes the TILP Certified Localisation Professional (CLP) programme in detail and by profession, using the example of the engineering stream, level 1.

A table provides an overview of the themes, courses and equivalent qualifications necessary to achieve different levels of certification.[8]

Credits are allocated to each theme to be covered within each stream. Courses covering any particular theme last a minimum of 6 contact hours per credit. (For example a 2-credit course lasts a minimum of 12 contact hours.)

Engineering (Software Engineer) – Level 1

The core task of localisation engineers is the compilation and assembly of software products from source files. The software localisation engineer is responsible for analysing, kitting, bug fixing, and building the localised software product. The job requires a wide range of technical skills. The Software engineer integrates into the overall localisation process and interacts with the core development team, the linguist, the project manager and the Quality engineer.

In order to qualify for Level 1 TILP Software Engineer certification, the candidate must have accumulated 8 credits from the following list of modules. The first module is compulsory; the remaining 6 credits can be collected from any of the remaining modules.

In addition to the credits, candidates must have a minimum of 3 months practical experience in either a training or an educational environment covering practical project work or in a professional environment.

Minimum number of credits	Practical experience (months)
8	3

[8] Courses are marked depending on their current availability: course to be created (tbc); course exists (e);

TILP CLP Programme

Software Engineer – Level 1]

Outline of requirements

Code	Software Engineer Level 1 Professional Area	Theme	Course code	Course (any one)	Equivalent	Credits
CLPSE1OV	COMPULSORY MODULE Overview	Localisation Overview & the software engineering lifecycle (TBC)			1 year localisation industry experience	2
CLPSE1TF	Tools fundamentals	MS Windows-based user interface localisation tools	CLPSE1TF-ALC	Alchemy Catalyst Standard Level (E)	3 months project experience using this tool	2
			CLPSE1TF-PAS	Passolo Basic level (E)	As above	2
			CLPSE1TF-DEV	DeveloperStudio Basic Level (E	As above	2
CLPSE1AN	Analysis, Pretranslation & Kitting	Analysis, Pretranslation & Kitting Process & Methods (TBC)				2
	Bug Fixing, Verification, Updating	Bug Fixing, Verification, Updating Process & Methods (TBC)				2
	Problem solving & Troubleshooting for the software localisation engineer	Problem solving & Troubleshooting for the software localisation engineer (TBC)				1
CLPSE1BR	Build, Release & File Handling	MS Windows-based build, release and file handling tools	CLPSE1BR-SOU	Sourcesafe		1
			CLPSE1BR-INS	Installers		1
CLPSE1OS	Operating Systems	Introduction to operating systems for localisation engineers	CLPSE1OS-MSP	MS Professional (E)		2
			CLPSE1OS-APP	Apple Mac OS (E)		2
CLPSE1UI	UI Design fundamentals	Fundamentals of UI Design (E)	CLPSE1UI-FUN	Fundamentals of UI Design (E)		1

TILP accreditation of localisation teaching and training organizations

TILP accredits organisations offering courses relevant to localisation.

TILP has implemented the following accreditation procedure for organisations wishing to offer courses leading to the certification of localisation professionals by TILP.

- Organisations seeking TILP accreditation must submit an application to TILP.
- Following the application, TILP will arrange an audit with the applicants.
- The TILP Council will review applications and decide whether or not to grant TILP accreditation.
- Accreditation will be granted for one calendar year.
- Organisations accredited by TILP are entitled to display "TILP accredited Localisation Course Provider" and the TILP logo.

The certification is administered by TILP. TILP's Accreditation Committee reviews applications and the material submitted by applicants. One representative of each of the Professional Membership Review Committees and the TILP CEO are members of the Accreditation Committee. The Accreditation Committee recommends a decision to the TILP Council. The TILP Council decides on the accreditation of teaching and training organisations.

Accreditation

The original accreditation involves a thorough review of the applicant's operation. This includes:

- Course material
  - Curricula
  - Sample of teaching material
  - Sample of laboratory exercises / tutorials
  - Sample examinations

- Facilities
  - Lecture theatres
  - Lab facilities

- Tutors
  - Selection process
  - Qualifications
  - Experience

- Administration
  - Registration procedures
  - Registration records
  - Attendance records
  - Examination records

The TILP Accreditation Committee will request applicants to submit material (samples) that will allow them to assess the operation of the applicant.

The Accreditation Committee will then arrange a meeting with the applicant, where feasible at the applicant's premises. During this visit, the applicant will allow the Accreditation Committee access to relevant material (see list above).

The applicant will also arrange meetings between the visiting Committee and the organisation's:

- Administrators;
- lecturers / tutors/ instructors;
- students.

Following this meeting, the Accreditation Committee will issue a report to the TILP Council who will decide whether or not to accredit the applicant.

The Council will inform the applicant of its decision.

Annual Audit

TILP carry out an annual audit of the organisation and its course offering. The TILP Council will decide whether to renew the accreditation for the following year based on the audit report at its last meeting of a calendar year.

This audit will include:

- review of attendance records;
- inspection of facilities;
- review of course curricula;
- review of teaching material;
- review of examination standards.

Fees

TILP will charge a fee to the applying organization to fund the accreditation process and the annual audit.

TILP charges for the accreditation of organisations and the issuing of certificates to individuals to cover its costs. Fees and charges do not include a profit element.

Certificates will be provided by TILP to the accredited organisation. The fee due to TILP will be paid by the accredited organisation upon receipt of the certificates requested.

The certificates will be co-signed by TILP and the accredited organisation. The accredited organisation and TILP will both keep a record of certificates issued.
All fees and charges are subject to review by TILP.

Accreditation of Course Providers	Original Accreditation (in euro)	Annual Audit (in euro)	Fee per certificate issued
Basic fees for 2004	4,000	700	50 (total) 15 per module

In addition to the basic fee, the applicant will cover the expenses of the visiting Accreditation Committee. The fixed amount will be agreed with TILP in advance of the visit.

Conclusions

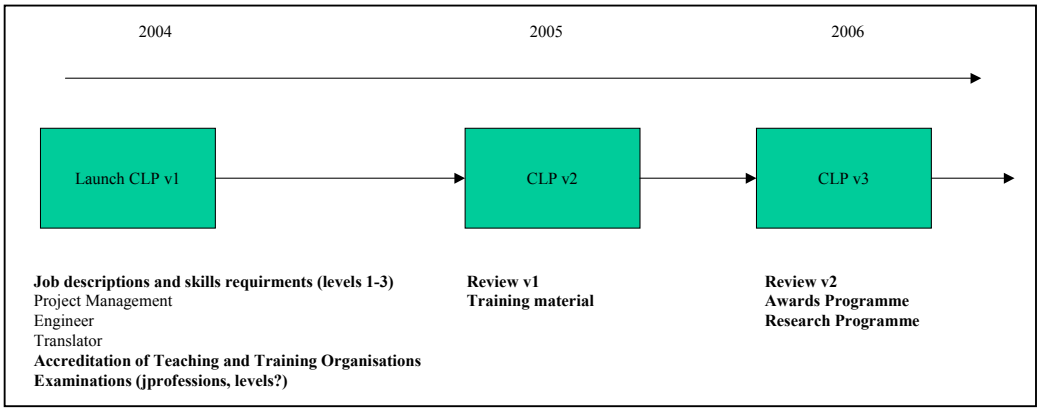
The TILP CLP programme was launched on 21 September 2004 at LRC '04, the 9th Annual International Localisation Conference and Exhibition organised by the Localisation Research Centre (LRC), at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

The CLP Programme is administered by TILP's Professional Standards Committee and supervised by the TILP Council.

It certifies the professional standard of individuals working in localisation project management, engineering and testing, internationalisation and linguistics.

Certification can be applied for by individuals who can demonstrate a mixture of professional experience and formal qualifications achieved by the successful completion of courses offered by TILP accredited course providers.

TILP has already accredited a private and a public course provider, Globalanswers and the University of Limerick respectively. TILP plans to accredit a growing number of course providers in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia throughout 2005.



While TILP currently does not provide course material and centralised exams, it is planning to develop this over the coming years as the TILP CLP programme expands.

For further information and updates on the TILP CLP programme, visit www.tilponline.org or email CLP@tilponline.org.

Acknowledgements

The support received by the European Union's ADAPT Programme for the development of the initial CLP project (A-1997-Irl-551) is acknowledged. This project was coordinated by the LRC. The project partners were: FÁS (Irish National Training Agency), CATT (Siemens Nixdorf Training Centre) and TELSI Ireland, supported by a large number of stakeholders.

The author also would like to acknowledge the support of Siobhan King-Hughes in the preparation of the first CLP certification outline, partially reproduced in this article.