

the e-book for translators

Translation Tools: How to make the best of them?

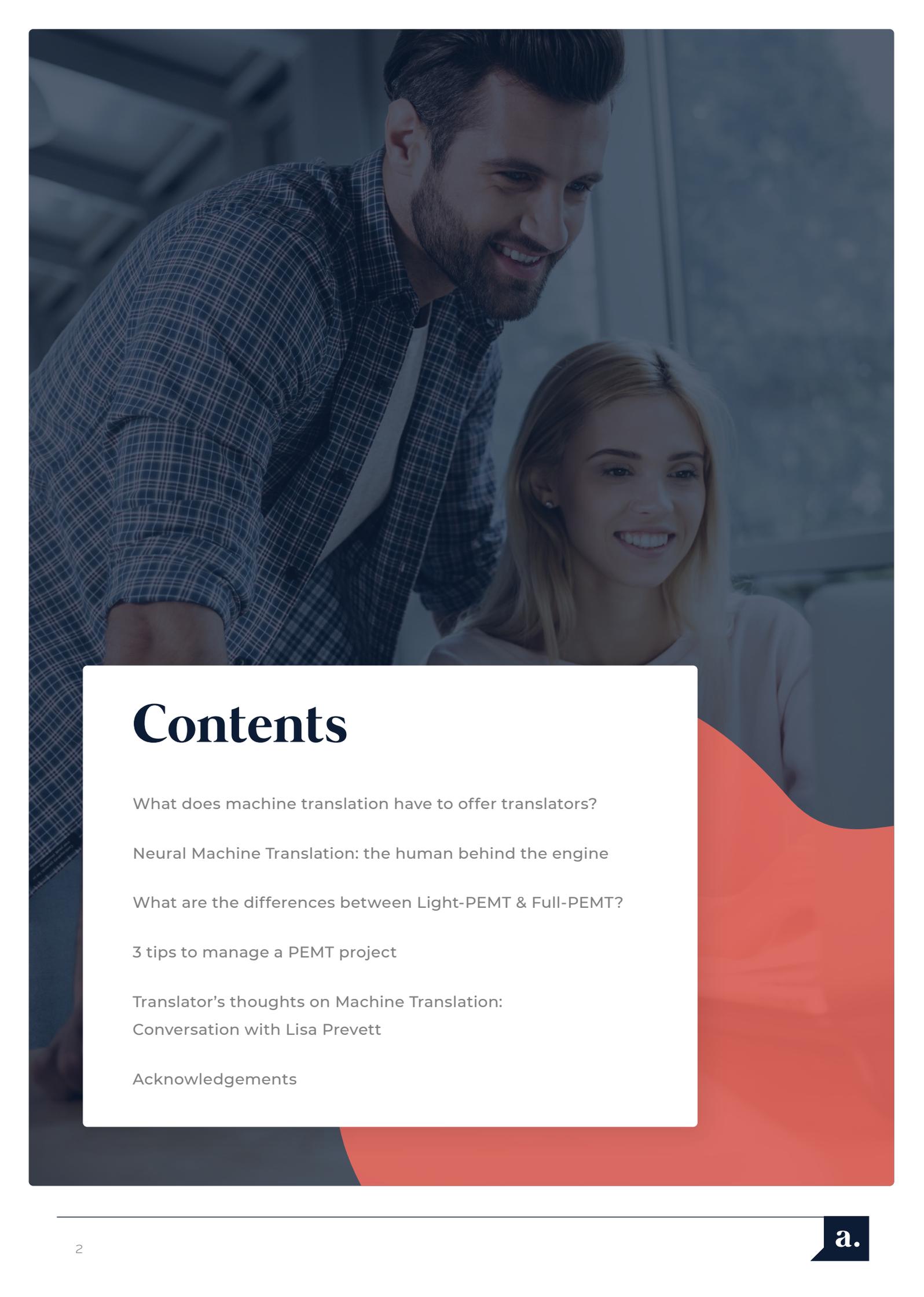
PART 2

Machine Translation & PEMT

acolad.

COMMUNITY



A man and a woman are smiling and looking at a screen together. The man is leaning over the woman, and they both appear to be in a professional or collaborative setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing what might be office equipment or a window.

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What does machine translation have to offer translators?

Since neural machine translation (NMT) was invented a few years ago, machine translation has improved significantly. While NMT engines can produce more fluent-sounding results, a linguist is still needed on these jobs for two reasons:

- Language is a living thing that is constantly evolving, whereas an engine needs training to assimilate the latest language data.
- Other factors (detailed further on) mean a machine-generated text will have shortcomings that not even the most advanced translation engine will ever be able to overcome.

Post-editing is an opportunity for translators wanting to be part of the adventure to add a new string to their bow.

Work faster on more words with NMT

NMT can translate texts a hundred times longer than a human translator can in the same period. This means the human saves a lot of time. And time is the most precious resource for a translator working on several projects at once.

Translation doesn't just mean converting a text to another language. The process involves various other steps including reading, understanding the topic and proofreading. And these steps take time: often much more time than the actual translation. With the help of an NMT engine, the translator wastes less time correcting the simplest phrases. This means they can focus on the sentences requiring more "interpretation".

Increase your productivity with NMT

NMT helps translators work quicker and complete more projects. The most common approach is to use a hybrid solution where the CAT tool has a translation memory (TM) that picks up any 100% matches or "fuzzy" segments. The other segments are translated automatically by the engine and the glossary is added to the CAT tool to help the translator with the content from the TM and MT. The engine's performance is also regularly improved.

Master the MT engine for a better translation

Machine translation increases the translator's productivity as long as the "right" texts are put through it. Machine translation engines aren't suitable for source texts with certain difficulties that a human translator would find easy to overcome such as transcriptions and texts with dubious syntax.

Content should also be as clear as possible with a well-written source. This is rarely the case in reality, so a human translator is needed to clarify this vagueness. Unsurprisingly, MT achieves the best results with technical texts (legal, IT, medical, etc.) with specific terminology and more uniform syntax.

To post-edit, you need training

The more sophisticated the MT engine, the harder it is to spot every error, transformation, omission, syntax issue and vocabulary problem. Post-editing training is required as the approach is quite different to that taken with translation. Humans can step in on subjective elements that a machine will never understand, like humour, stylistic devices and cultural references.

With NMT, translators are more versatile

NMT also benefits clients. With engine quality rapidly improving and time savings on offer, clients can now have content translated that they previously didn't have time for. They should call on translators who know how to post-edit, which generates jobs.

Technology isn't a threat: it facilitates effective translation as long as there is a human in charge of the machine.

Neural Machine Translation: the human behind the engine

On 18 June 2019, translators attended a Translator's meetup at Acolad's headquarters in Paris. They participated in a round table discussion on PEMT moderated by **Victoria Weidemann**, formerly Acolad's Head of Marketing, **Yoann Auffret**, in-house translator and **Lamis Mhedhbi**, linguistic and IT project manager at TextMaster, were here to give their expertise.



Victoria: Now if you had to explain PEMT to a child... Is it challenging or not? How would you describe it?

Yoann: The way I see it is that it's a text that comes out of a translation engine, and post-editing is really the moment when the human translator intervenes on the output. In other words, the output is the text produced by the engine.

So, we will make sure to spot issues, especially critical ones, and correct them and make improvements when it's possible, however the output is good sometimes and we don't need to change it. Then, we will bring our own distinctive writing style when it's needed and improve some elements that we think are obvious and useful.

Victoria: Now to the scientist who develops these engines, what does the human translator bring to this matter?

Lamis: I would say that the human translator brings everything that the machine cannot bring. That means a linguistic, contextual and cultural expertise that is our own (fortunately!). This is a contribution that the machine can never bring (although...) and never has, so post-editing is essential today because we need your expertise to work on the machine's output and correct it.



Victoria: Same question to Yoann, who deals with this every day?

Yoann: I think where we are really going to intervene and add value, and some of you will agree with me, is when there are some issues with the source text. Indeed, a word can be misplaced in the source text, another one may be poorly written... It is really the quality of the source text and the way the source text has been edited that will have an impact on the context of a sentence.

So, if there is no human intervention, the engine will certainly identify some elements, but if the human translator is not there to check these elements and change them if needed, it could be more difficult. Therefore, we add our expertise and our vision of the context and the source language.

Victoria: So you're talking about stylistic elements, brand language for transcreation, that is of course, extremely important. But are there types of texts for which post-editing will never be possible?

Lamis: I would say journalistic texts, where there is really transcreation to do rather than translation, where the linguist really has to adapt the text to a different audience, and that is, I think, something that a machine will never be able to do. So yes, literary to highly literary texts, journalistic texts where there are stylistic figures, irony, puns, elements that a machine cannot take into account... in a nutshell!

What are the differences between Light-PEMT & Full-PEMT?



Post-editing process resulting in a text that is comprehensible without necessarily being up to the standards of human translation (ISO 18587:2017)



Post-editing process resulting in a text that is up to the standards of human translation (ISO 18587:2017)

Light post-editing

Makes the most of raw output

Grammar and spelling rules take a back seat to meaning

Meaning prioritised over and above syntax and style

Formatting isn't a priority

Offensive or inappropriate terms must be corrected

Coherent terminology isn't a priority

Full post-editing

Makes the most of raw output

Grammar and spelling must be corrected

Meaning and terminology must be precise and correct

Style must be suitable and flowing

Offensive or inappropriate terms must be corrected

Formatting must be in line with source text

Light vs. Full post-editing

	Light	Full
Ensure exactness of content	✓	✓
Correct grammar	✓	✓
Correct ALL spelling mistakes	✗	✓
Only correct spelling mistakes highlighted by the spell check	✓	✓
Improve syntax	✗	✓
Modify nonsensical sentences	✓	✓
Correct additions and omissions	✓	✓
Adapt cultural references	✗	✓
Correct offensive expressions	✓	✓
Verify coherence with translation memory	✗	✓
Harmonise key terminology	✗	✓
Verify harmonisation of terminology with glossary	✗	✓
Ensure that the style flows and is natural	✗	✓
Correct punctuation	✗	✓
Add tags	✗	✓
Modify formatting	✗	✓

Stages of post-editing



3 tips to manage a PEMT project

1

Apply the 2-second rule.

The decision to use the raw output or to translate a segment from scratch must be prompt. If the quality of the translation from the engine is of poor quality, it is quicker to translate.

2

Read the target segment, then the source segment.

During a revision, we look at the source segment before analyzing and correcting the target segment. In post-editing, we proceed in the opposite way, especially to be able to apply the 2-second rule.

3

Use the QA checker before and after.

Using a QA tool before starting the actual post-editing allows you to correct the most obvious and basic errors and the terminology if it does not match the glossary.

Translator's thoughts on Machine Translation



Conversation with

Lisa Prevett

I have to admit that, until working with Acolad and the in-house computational linguists on post-editing projects, the thought of “machine translation” made me break out into a cold sweat. Having worked on a post-editing job some years ago, at the start of my career as a translator – with output of questionable quality and no clear instructions provided with the job(!) – the idea of working on new post-editing jobs didn't exactly fill me with excitement!

It was therefore a great opportunity to understand the huge strides made in the field of machine translation over the last decade, to see how the in-house computational linguists worked on creating and continuously training the dedicated Acolad engines, and to learn the latest tips and techniques for post-editing.

[Thanks to the advances in technology and the work of Acolad's dedicated team, it was therefore a pleasant surprise to open this next generation of post-editing projects and find that gone are the days of unintelligible sentences that used to take twice as long to rewrite than if a human translator had done the original translation!]

This output was coherent and stylistically appropriate, with correct use of specialist terminology and only slight post-editing needed for grammar and spelling issues, for example.

Having better quality raw output means that, as a post-editor, I can concentrate more on the aspects where I can bring added value, such as improving the style and ensuring terminology coherence throughout the text, rather than having to completely re-translate the raw output. And this makes post-editing so much more satisfying!



I have also come to appreciate the different skills that a translator has to use as a post-editor. In practice, a good approach to post-editing is slightly different to that of a traditional translation or proofread.

[Post-editing, in my experience, requires a combination of the skills employed as a translator and those of a proofreader. A sort of hybrid, where the aim is to use as much of the raw output as possible, whilst also using translation skills to re-write and improve the suggested translation provided by the engine, as well as proofreading this output to check for accuracy and correct grammar, amongst other things.]

My experience has been that this requires adapting previously acquired skills to meet the post-editing requirements. It has meant having to employ a new approach and, essentially, turn well-honed processes upside down in order to meet the challenges and

requirements of a post-editing project.

For example, rather than just running the QA Checker at the end of a proofread, it is easier and quicker to run two QAs, by running a QA at the beginning of a post-editing job to help eliminate the most basic errors first and make it easier to tackle the post-editing.

I've also found that post-editing requires a combination of skills, such as attention to detail to ensure aspects such as terminology consistency throughout a document, for example, as well as using CAT tool expertise by being able to take full advantage of various features – such as knowing how to use the filters to the best possible advantage.

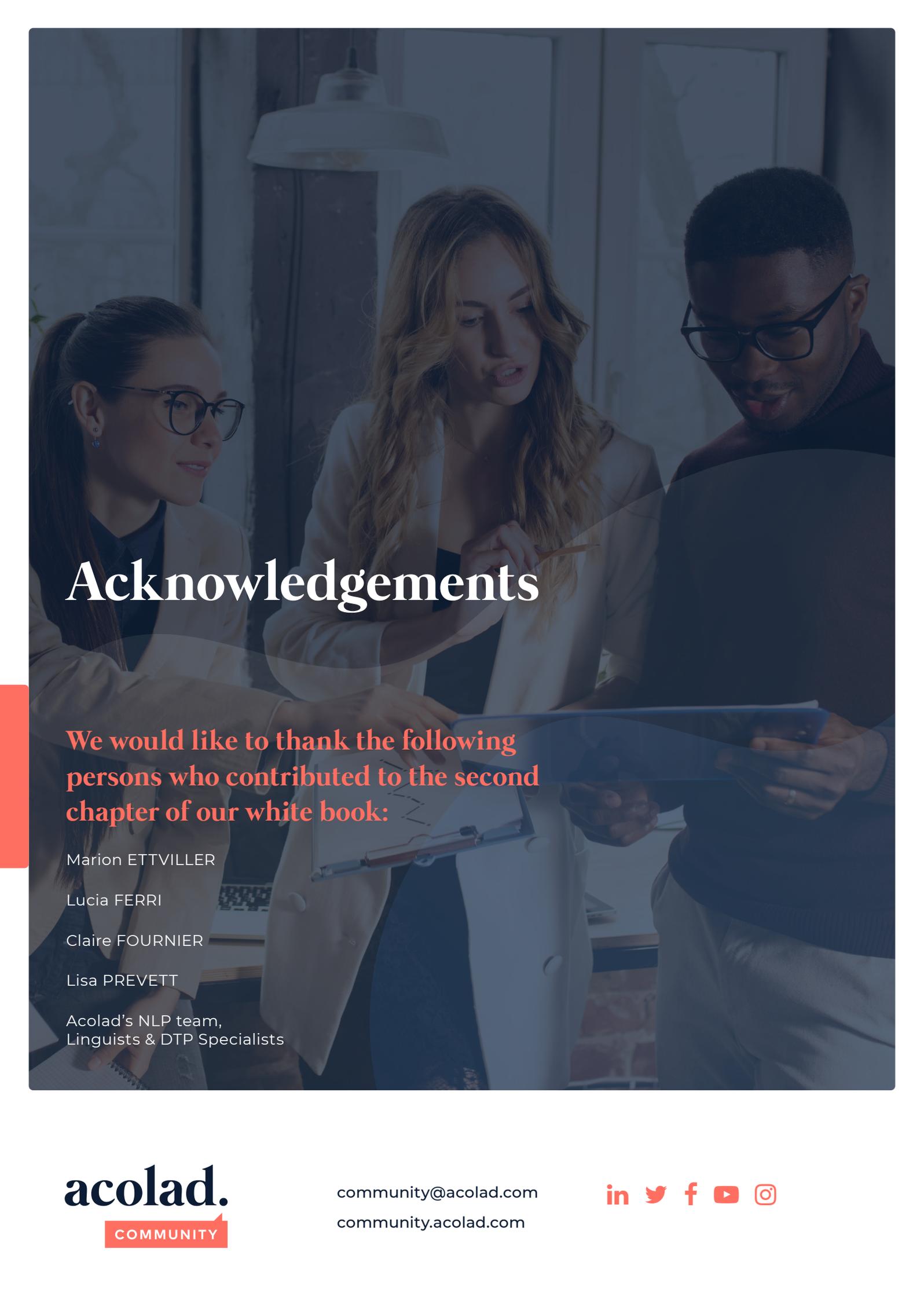
[This kind of challenge where man meets machine, whilst potentially appearing daunting at first, is actually – on reflection – rather exciting! A finely balanced juggling act where, as translators, we can use a combination of our skills to produce a perfectly post-edited text.]

[The translation industry is continuing to evolve and I believe that it is important for us to evolve with it and play a role in shaping this evolution, by contributing our specialist expertise.]

Technology and AI are present in all sectors and clients increasingly request machine translation as a solution.

It is therefore important for us to respond to the needs of our clients, whilst advising and supporting them with the expertise that we have as professional linguists. Just as our profession adapted to CAT tools, post-editing is one of the latest steps for our industry.

I'm excited to be part of this challenge!

A photograph of three business professionals in a meeting. A woman on the left with glasses and a ponytail is pointing at a document. A woman in the center with long blonde hair is holding a pen and looking at the document. A man on the right with glasses is also looking at the document. The background is a modern office setting with a lamp and a window.

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