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M.M. Shaimaa Abdul Zahra Rakhees

Beyond the Machine: Rethinking AI Tools in
Translator Training for Iraqi Students

E-Mail: shaymaa.rukhis122@tu.edu.iq

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E-mail Jaa@tu.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

Given the limited and non-systematic use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in translation education in Iraq, this research examines how such modern technologies may be useful and supportive tools within translation learning programs. This study is convinced that despite the partial effectiveness of these tools, they cannot replace the analytical and mental capacity of human translators. Throughout my academic experience in teaching translation, I have noticed that translation students sometimes depend on tools like ChatGPT with no realization of what should be limited. This is a serious problem that affects their skills and development. It also seeks to propose a deeper insight into merging artificial intelligence with translator training programs, on the condition that this is done under academic terms and guidelines that maintain the fundamental notion of translation as a perceptive and cultural act. The study gives attention to the analysis of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Google Translate and DeepL to estimate their benefits and drawbacks in promoting translation learning. Finally, it confirms that the use of AI should remain a support only, not a replacement for human conscious judgment and decision.

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ما وراء الآلات: رؤية جديدة لدور الذكاء الصناعي في تعليم وتأهيل طلبة الترجمة العراقيين
م.م. شيماء عبد الزهرة رخيص /جامعة تكريت/ كلية الآداب/ قسم الترجمة

المستخلص:

في ظل الاستخدام الغير منظم والمحدد لأدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي في تعليم الترجمة في العراق، تتحرى هذه الدراسة امكانيات هذه التقنيات الحديثة التي من الممكن ان تكون أدوات مفيدة وداعمة في برامج تعلم الترجمة. ترى الدراسة أنه رغم الفاعلية الجزئية لهذه الأدوات، إلا أنها لا يمكن أن تحل محل القدرات التحليلية والعقلية التي يمتلكها المترجم البشري. ومن خلال تجربتي في مجال التدريس الأكاديمي لاحظت أن طلاب الترجمة يلجأون أحيانا إلى استخدام أدوات مثل جات جي بي تي بدون ادراك كامل لحدودها. وهذه مشكلة خطيرة من الممكن ان تؤثر على مهاراتهم وعلى تطويرها.

كما تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى اقتراح رؤية أعمق لدمج الذكاء الاصطناعي في برامج تدريب المترجمين على أن يتم هذا الدمج ضمن شروط أكاديمية تحافظ على المفهوم الأساسي للترجمة بوصفها عملاً إدراكياً وثقافياً. لأجل تقييم فوائدها ChatGPT و Google Translate و DeepL تركز الدراسة على تحليل أدوات مثل ومحدودياتها في تعزيز تعلم الترجمة. وتؤكد أخيراً أن استخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي يجب أن يبقى مساعداً فقط، لا بديلاً عن الحكم الواعي والقرار العقلاني البشري. الذكاء الاصطناعي، تدريب المترجم، العراق، التفكير النقدي، التوازن بين الانسان والآلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الذكاء الاصطناعي، تدريب المترجم، العراق، التفكير النقدي، التوازن بين الانسان والآلة

Introduction:

Lately, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a prominent factor in linguistic fields, especially translation. Several academic institutions all over the world have begun using AI tools within their translation programs.

Though this evolution is increasing in some countries, Iraqi universities are still behind in this regard. Translation teaching is still delivered in a traditional way without the formal integration of AI tools. Thus, Current translation teaching programs lack training on how tools like DeepL and ChatGPT should be used, which may create a gap between what students learn and what modern market demands..

Many leading academic institutions and international universities have begun incorporating AI technologies into their translation training programs in addition to language teaching, over the past few years. For example, the University of Helsinki, as part of wider European research projects, introduced courses on machine translation and AI techniques into its translation studies (European Language Grid, 2020). Similarly, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) announced research initiatives in an attempt to explore the role of AI in higher education, especially in the fields of translation and linguistics (MIT News, 2021). Cambridge University Press underlined that AI has become an integral part of the modern methods of teaching, as an explanation for its announcement on the role of AI in language teaching and translation research (Cambridge University Press, 2022.)

Translation students often tend to use AI tools incorrectly and randomly. As an instructor in this field, I see that this phenomenon necessarily needs to be addressed within an academic course, without undermining the human role in translation.

In consequence, in this study, we mainly aim to discuss the ability of AI to be integrated into Iraqi translation training in a systematic fashion, in addition to comparing it with human translation to test the limitations of the former. The following questions are addresses in this study in a specific manner, such as: to what extent AI generates outputs that similar or dissimilar? How do translation students and instructors realize the role of AI in translation?

To this end, the study adopts a questionnaire that gathers both translation students' and translation instructors' viewpoints in an

organized way. The questionnaire also includes short translation tasks in order to compare human translation and AI outputs, which offer two types of insights-quantitative and qualitative.

Orderly, the chapters are followed in the way that the first one gives a literature review to the subject, the second one, in detail, will clear the methodology that adopted in this paper, lastly, will be presented and discussed the results. Later on, the research offer direction that may be used for as potential future research.

2. Theoretical Background

Included translation, many professional fields have reformed via Artificial Intelligence (AI). Whereas AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Google Translate and DeepL, are used in translation teaching throughout the world more and more, unlike Iraqi translation teaching, which is still restricted and unreformed because the aforementioned tools are not yet integrated into translators training or educational programmes (Bowker& Buitrago, 2019; Pym, 2021). In this chapter, the literature review will provide the basis for the study, in order to investigate how AI tools can be helpful in the process of translator training, and, at the same time, the fundamental role of the human translator is going to be realized.

2.1 Definition and Scope of Artificial Intelligence in Translation

Artificial Intelligence is referred to as computer programmes or systems that have the ability to do some functions that need human intelligence in a typical manner, for example, understanding language and solving problems (Russell & Norvig, 2020). In accordance with translation, algorithm of machine learning is applied by AI tools, so that, texts are processed and produced beyond languages. (Castilho et al, 2018) mentioned that this field of AI is extended from word for word translation, complex, to context - sensitive interpretations.

2.2 Advantages of AI in the Training of Translators.

AI has the capacity to provide many possible benefits, including the following:

- speed as well as competency, Artificial Intelligence can produce quick drafts for the beginner students of translation studies

- By proposing diverse language outputs, translation students are able to explore many translation options (Bowker, 2020).
- it can be supportive in learning, to promote critical thinking when AI is used as a reference to compare with human translation (Garcia, 2017).
- Helpful for languages that have minimum resources, to fill the gap that could be found in pairs of less common language (Johnson et al., 2017).

It should be mentioned that AI can be beneficial if only it is used under academic instruction and not a substitute for the human mind.

2.3 AI as a Supportive Tool, Not a Substitution.

AI tools are beneficial in the way that they provide us instant translation solutions or suggestions, but they lack human critical thinking or judgment, cultural understanding, and emotional reactions (Toral& Way, 2018). If the students of translation rely only on AI, it will lead to superficial learning. Through, using AI as an assistant can empower their analytical skills and their creative abilities. (Bowker & Ciro, 2019).

2.4 Disadvantages and Limitations of AI in Translator Training.

Using AI in translation learning also comes with definite pitfalls:

- AI tools are data-based; training data may include some errors or expired terms as well as cultural opinions with different tendencies (Koehn, 2020).
- They tend to simplify, AI tools usually prefer to shorten and smooth texts that may lead to a loss of nuances and depth (Toral, 2020).
- t reduces language progress, the use of AI constantly refine vocabulary from growth and style from being variety (Garcia, 2017).

Depending on technology, translation students may lose their ability to translate without resorting to AI help (Pym, 2021).

- Safety concerns, sensitive texts may be exposed to privacy violation and copyright issues (European Language Council, 2022).
- AI does not give guarantees; machines are not responsible for mistranslations (Kenny, 2022).

From this end, it is necessary to control AI to be only an educational aid not a substitute for human competence and aptitudes.

3. Methodology

Data collection was not only the reason behind the methodology that was designed, but also to compare AI translations with human ones in order to spotlight their benefits and limitations. Therefore, this chapter describes the methods used in this research paper to examine the role of AI tools in the process of Iraqi academic translators training.

A mixed method was adopted by this study that, combined between qualitative and quantitative ones to give a clear image of the way Iraqi translator training is influencing by AI tools. The quantitative methods offered dimensions of trends, such as how much AI tools are used frequently, on the other hand, the qualitative one presents in-depth insights into the attitudes and experiences of translation instructors as well as students. This mixed method suffices as the main device because both closed-ended questions and open - ended questions are included, the former gave measurable information, while the latter provided the study with views and examples that helped to identify the advantages and disadvantages of AI use. This method gave us even results at the same time it supported statistical outcomes with real life viewpoints.

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Translation Instructors from Tikrit University as well as third and fourth year translation department students in the translation department/ College of Arts were purposely chosen as the participants for this study,

to make sure that only those with sufficient experience in the translation field contributed to it. Students are subjected to translation courses, while instructors play the main role in the process of training and assessing translators. So, the chosen samples were large enough to provide reliable quantitative data and small enough to allow meaningful qualitative viewpoints.

A questionnaire, written in English, of three sections (demographic information, AI usage samples, in addition to translation tasks) included background details, such as teaching experience, years of experience as well as gender, in its first part. The second part examined how frequently the participants used AI tools and for what reasons. In the third one, the participants were asked to translate some short texts in two ways, one by themselves, and the second with the help of an AI tool they prefer, providing, thus, direct comparison material. At the end, they were asked to give opinions on which one of the two translations seemed better for them and why.

The questionnaire was distributed via electronic applications during the summer break, so that instructors and students of the translation department could reply without face to face interviews. I shared the link through the university channels with clear instructions so that the participants were guided by the steps. This approach made it fast and easy to some extent, keeping the database plentiful and heterogeneous.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from the aforementioned questionnaire will be analyzed in two methods mostly:

1. Quantitative analysis: By using descriptive statistics, such as percentage, frequency, and mean, we will analyze closed-ended survey replies.
2. Qualitative analysis: We will examine translation samples in addition to open-ended replies for the sake of common themes, linguistic models, and strengths or pitfalls in AI translations vs. human ones in particular.

3 This mixed two -methods approach will be beneficial in providing numerical results enhanced with qualitative perspectives. Thus, an equal and well supported conclusion will be presented.

4.1 Quantitative data analysis:

Thirty individuals, 57% students (mainly third year) and 43% instructors, took part in the survey. Ranging from one to seventeen years of experience, a wide range of experience was recorded by the instructors, while two of them were not sure about the exact year of experience they had. This distribution allowed gaining an even database, representing both trainers and learners, which makes the results more reliable and stronger by capturing viewpoints from varied levels of translation proficiency.

Percentage of AI usage was recorded as follows: 43% sometimes, 21% often, 18% rarely, 13% always, and only a small part mentioned never. This refers to the growing usage of AI in translation training, nevertheless, not yet totally incorporated. "Sometimes" is dominant, which suggests stable reliance with vigilance. This shows increasing acceptance of AI tools with cautious to rely on them in an exclusive manner.

The question about the causes behind using AI tools recorded different responses: 35 % for speed, 30% for vocabulary aid, and 8% for grammar, while others said that they use these tools to develop a second language as well as skills and substitutional phrasing. These results serve as a proof that AI is not thought as a substitution but as a supportive instrument, highly rated for activity and language supporter. Another approach was revealed by the questionnaire with regard to particular benefits related to tasks instead of exhaustive solutions.

4.2 Qualitative data analysis:

Regarding the question about the advantages of AI tools, the participants identified several ones; speed efficiency, vocabulary improvement, and support for grammar understanding. Some participants shed light on the capacity of AI to deal with long texts and save time. They also mentioned that AI tools are useful for routine tasks. In addition, they noted that AI exposes different structures related to language as well

as substituted expressions, which is a good association and development to their language and translation learning.

On the other hand, regular incapacities were reported by the same participants, such as, repeated errors in meaning (in legal or technical texts in particular), reliability problems, and concerns related to plagiarism and privacy

Whereas, others pointed out that over- dependence on AI diminishes creativity and critical thinking in addition to cultural sensitivity (particularly when dealing with taboos or idiomatic expressions). Even a few of them mentioned that such technology risks decreasing the professional status of translators, that AI tools might motivate dependency and minimize the original human career.

Comparing AI and human translations, 52% of the participants chose a combination of both, while 40% preferred human ones, and only 8% were in favor of AI alone. Answerers illustrated that human translations ensure adequacy as well as cultural fitness, and the "soul" of the text, whereas AI offers speeding and first drafts. One mentioned, for instance, that AI misinterpreted the term "arise" as "ترتفع" illustrating the AI tools' restrictions in contexts with sensitive meaning. Another one said that human translation is exceptionally much better in literary and cultural texts. They viewed AI as an assistant rather than a replacement. These answers confirm that AI is estimated only as helpful tools not as a substitute for human professionalism.

The results demonstrate the integration of AI tools into translation learning to an increasing extent but they do not stand by themselves along as independent solutions. Their worth is well understood by the participants with regard to speed, vocabulary in addition to grammar aid. On the other hand, the same participants stressed their restrictions in terms of adequacy, cultural appropriateness, and creativity. Most were in favor of a hybrid model. That is, AI benefits as an aid while human translations keep control over on meaning and quality. The results confront the research problem in a direct way as they show the capacity and the disadvantages or risks of AI in translator education. As well, they reassure the recommendation of this study that training programs should

teach students how to use AI tools in a critical and responsible manner, and not depending of them in indiscriminating way.

5. Discussion

Depending on the findings, it becomes clear that AI is present in Iraqi translation training more and more, and it is not regarded as a substitute for human translation. The majority of the participants preferred to combine both methods (Human and AI translation), asserting the speed and convenience that AI provides, while adequacy, cultural sense and creativity are only ensured by human ones. This is in line with previous studies (Bowker & Buitrago Ciro, 2019; Pym, 2021), which draw attention to the suggestion that AI can only serve as an assistant instrument.

Participants highlighted concerns about the consequences of depending on AI in an exaggerated way. They also shed light on risks of reducing critical thinking, creativity, in addition to ethical matters such as plagiarism and privacy, thus, directly striking the points made by Kenny (2022) and the European Language Council (2022). These concerns reflect the necessity for careful integration of AI in translator learning.

In general, the results suggest that, if it is used in a balanced way as an aid rather than a replacement, AI can enhance translator training in Iraq. Guided by educational courses and frameworks, translation students may benefit from AI efficiency and developing fundamental human skills in judgment, solving problems, as well as cultural interpretation at the same time.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the role of AI in training Iraqi translators was surveyed. The results revealed that AI exists more and more and is esteemed for many reasons such as speed, vocabulary and competence but it is not regarded as a substitute for human translations. Human translators are still essential for adequacy and cultural sensitivity as well as originality.

The results also support the advantages and disadvantages or risks of AI. They suggest and assert the fair and healthy usage of AI;

which can boost learning and maintain the critical human abilities, such as imagination, judgment and cultural understanding, together.

The study recommends the following as well:

- .Use AI tools wisely as supportive not substitution for your judgement
- . Integration of well-built and organized courses on the use of AI in a critical and responsible ways to the programs of translation teaching.
- . Empowerment of human skills together with AI activity.
- .Use AI tools wisely as a supportive, not as a substitution for your judgment.
- .Integrate well-built and organized courses on the use of AI in critical and responsible ways into translation teaching programs.
- . Empower human skills together with AI activity.
- .Promote ongoing future research in order to track how AI affects translation learning.

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