

LITERARY TRANSLATION IN THE AGE OF AI AND MACHINE LEARNING

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies have significantly transformed the field of translation. Tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and AI-based language models like Chat GPT are now widely accessible and capable of producing increasingly fluent translations. However, while these tools demonstrate remarkable progress in handling technical and everyday texts, the question remains: Can AI meaningfully contribute to literary translation, a task that requires sensitivity to nuance, ambiguity, voice, and style?

Literary translation goes beyond lexical equivalence; it involves recreating the tone, rhythm, cultural references, and emotional resonance of the source text in a new language. Such tasks demand creative intuition and interpretive judgment — skills traditionally attributed to human translators [1, p. 45]. AI models trained on massive multilingual corpora can imitate syntactic patterns and vocabulary usage, but they often lack the interpretive depth and contextual sensitivity required for literature.

To assess the role of AI in literary translation let's compare AI and human renderings of selected literary passages. Consider the final line of "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Two Ukrainian translations are compared: one produced by DeepL and another by Volodymyr Panchenko [2]:

- AI Translation (DeepL): І ось ми пливемо, човни проти течії, безупинно віднесені назад у минуле.
- Human Translation (Panchenko): Тож ми пливемо вперед, мов човни проти течії, невпинно віднесені назад у минуле.

While both translations convey the literal content, only the human version captures the symbolic rhythm and tone of Fitzgerald's sentence. Panchenko introduces «мов» ("like") to preserve the simile, and the verb «невпинно» maintains a more lyrical quality than the AI's «безупинно». The AI rendering is mechanically competent, but stylistically inert — an example of how machines may grasp the structure but not the soul of a literary text.

The use of AI in this context should not be viewed as a threat but as a tool to assist human translators. Recent studies suggest that post-editing AI drafts can enhance productivity in some domains [3, p. 296], but this process raises ethical questions in literature. Who holds the copyright of an AI-assisted translation? Can a translator claim authorship after editing machine-generated output?

In conclusion, AI will not replace literary translators, but it is reshaping the process. The challenge now lies in striking a balance between technological assistance and human creativity, ensuring that literature in translation retains its emotional, cultural, and aesthetic force.

REFERENCES

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2. Fitzgerald, F. S. *The Great Gatsby*. Trans. by Volodymyr Panchenko. Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2013.
3. Moorkens, J. "Under Pressure: Translation in Times of Artificial Intelligence." *Translation Spaces*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2018, pp. 291–306.
4. DeepL Translator. <https://www.deepl.com/translator>