



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR IN POST-EDITING PRACTICE

Hikmatova So'g'diyona Akmal qizi

Graduate students of National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulug'bek

Scientific supervisor: DSc, associate prof. Y. Y. Arustamyan

Faculty of foreign philology, National University of Uzbekistan

Abstract

The increasing integration of artificial intelligence into translation technologies has transformed traditional perceptions of the translator's role. Modern machine translation systems can produce target-language texts with a high degree of fluency, but their output still requires critical human evaluation. In this context, post-editing has emerged as an important area of professional translation practice. This paper examines how artificial intelligence and machine translation are changing the responsibilities and competencies of translators. Particular attention is paid to the shift from the translator as the sole producer of the target text to the translator as an evaluator, editor and quality controller of machine-generated output. The paper argues that technological development does not make human translation competence irrelevant. Instead, it increases the importance of critical reading, contextual interpretation, terminology management and quality assessment. The future translator is therefore likely to require both strong linguistic competence and the ability to work effectively with AI-assisted translation technologies.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, machine translation, post-editing, translator competence, translation technology, human-machine interaction.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence has become increasingly visible in the field of translation. Translation technologies that once produced visibly mechanical and often grammatically





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weak texts can now generate remarkably fluent output. This development has affected not only the tools available to translators but also the professional workflow of translation itself.

The emergence of AI-assisted translation raises an important question: if a machine can produce a relatively fluent translation, what exactly remains for the human translator to do?

One answer can be found in the development of post-editing. Instead of producing the first version of the target text independently, the translator may begin by evaluating machine-generated output. The translator's task consequently involves comparison, judgement, correction and quality control.

1. From translator to post-editor

The traditional image of the translator is that of a professional who reads a source text and creates an appropriate target text. In an MTPE workflow, the initial target text has already been produced by a machine.

This does not mean that the translator's intellectual involvement disappears. On the contrary, the translator must determine whether the machine-generated text actually represents the source text accurately. A fluent sentence may contain a subtle semantic error, while an apparently awkward sentence may nevertheless communicate the intended meaning correctly.

The human translator therefore becomes an evaluator as well as a language professional. This change is particularly significant because it requires translators to develop the ability to identify problems that are not always immediately visible.

2. New competencies required for post-editing

Effective post-editing requires a combination of traditional translation skills and technological awareness.

First, translators need strong bilingual and intercultural competence. Without a



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detailed understanding of both the source and target languages, it is difficult to identify subtle distortions in machine-generated texts.

Second, terminological competence remains essential. AI systems may generate different equivalents for the same specialised term depending on context. The post-editor must therefore be able to recognise inappropriate terminology and maintain consistency throughout a text.

Third, translators need critical evaluation skills. They should not automatically accept fluent machine output. Instead, every important segment should be evaluated in relation to the source text and the purpose of the translation.

Recent research has also examined the relationship between translators' individual characteristics, MT quality and post-editing performance, indicating that successful MTPE involves more than simply knowing how to operate a translation tool.

3. AI as a tool rather than a replacement

The relationship between translators and AI is often discussed in terms of replacement: will machines replace human translators? Such a question may be too simplistic.

In professional translation, the more relevant issue is often how responsibilities are distributed between the machine and the human. The machine can provide a first draft quickly, identify possible translation equivalents and process large amounts of text. The human translator, however, remains responsible for deciding whether the result is appropriate.

This is particularly important when the text contains ambiguity, culturally specific expressions, specialised terminology or information where a small change in meaning can have significant consequences.

Full post-editing under ISO 18587 is specifically concerned with human intervention intended to bring machine-generated output to a quality level comparable





to human translation.

4. Challenges of AI-assisted post-editing

Despite its advantages, AI-assisted translation creates several challenges.

One challenge is overreliance on fluent output. Because modern systems can produce natural-sounding sentences, translators may be tempted to accept them without sufficient comparison with the source.

Another challenge is the possibility of subtle meaning changes. A machine-generated sentence can appear grammatically perfect while introducing an interpretation that is not present in the source text.

There is also the issue of professional responsibility. When a translator delivers a post-edited text, the final product is still subject to human quality expectations. Therefore, the ability to use AI effectively must be accompanied by the ability to question it.

5. The future of the translation profession

The increasing use of AI is likely to continue changing the organisation of translation work. Translators who understand both linguistic principles and translation technologies may be better prepared for this changing environment.

Rather than reducing the importance of translation expertise, post-editing can make certain aspects of that expertise more visible. The translator has to explain why a machine-generated sentence is inaccurate, decide how it should be improved and ensure consistency across the entire text.

Thus, future translation professionals may increasingly function as language experts, editors, evaluators and technology users simultaneously. Translation education should consequently provide students with opportunities to develop both conventional translation competence and practical MTPE skills.

Conclusion



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Artificial intelligence has changed the translation workflow, but it has not removed the need for human judgement. The development of increasingly fluent machine translation systems has made post-editing a significant professional activity in which translators evaluate and improve machine-generated texts.

The central challenge for translators is therefore not simply learning how to use AI tools. It is learning when to trust them, when to question them and when to replace their output completely. Strong linguistic competence, critical thinking, terminology management and technological awareness are likely to remain essential qualities of professional translators.

AI should consequently be viewed not simply as a competitor to human translators but as a technology that is reshaping the distribution of work within the translation process.

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