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**Artificial intelligence and its role in translation of fiction from the viewpoint of six female Slovak literary translators – yea or nay?**

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# Artificial intelligence and its role in translation of fiction from the viewpoint of six female Slovak literary translators – yea or nay?

## Dirbtinis intelektas ir jo vaidmuo grožinės literatūros vertime šešių slovakų literatūros vertėjų požiūriu – taip ar ne?

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**Abstract**

Over the last decade, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an inseparable part of translation studies. Works on the role of AI in the translation process (Moorkens et al., 2018; Youdale, 2020; Shahmerdanova, 2025), the future of translation in the AI era (Zanaty, 2024; Ye, 2024), AI in education (Yu & Lu, 2021; Chen, 2024) and many other such topics have been published. It is particularly interesting to see whether and how AI is used in translation of literary texts, as it is a highly creative process (Hadley et al., 2022) that cannot rely on generic answers. When it comes to less widely-spoken languages like Slovak, the use of neural machine translators might not facilitate the process: on the contrary, it might complicate it. The study maps, from a sociological viewpoint, attitudes towards, opinions about, and the experiences of neural machine translators and generative chatbots in literary translation drawn from a sample of professional literary translators. In the first phase of our explorative qualitative research (using a focus group method) we present the results related to the use or non-use of AI-driven tools in literary translation from foreign languages to Slovak, the influence of machine translators on the translation process, and the advantages and disadvantages of machine translation from the viewpoint of professional translators. Since there has not been any similar research conducted in Slovak academic milieux, we believe that our results provide at least a partial view of potential advantages, disadvantages, and problematic aspects of AI in literary translation from the viewpoint of professionals, including recommendations for good practice.

**KEYWORDS:** literary translation, AI-driven translation, artificial intelligence, professional literary translators, sociological research, focus groups.

## Introduction

The translation industry in Slovakia is, like the profession globally, constantly influenced by ever-developing technologies – CAT-tools, machine translators and, most importantly, artificial intelligence (hereinafter referred to as "AI"). Statistical machine translators (hereinafter referred to as "SMTs"), neural machine translators (hereinafter referred to as "NMTs"), and generative chatbots driven by large language models changed the expectations of all translation industry agents. While they might resemble a quick solution to demanding translation tasks, not every genre of text or type of translation might benefit from their use to the same extent. Translation of literary texts has many specifics, of which the essential ones include adequate interpretation of source text, understanding the author's intention, preserving the author's idiolect and the semantic and expressive layers of the original, including emotional charge and all linguistic and stylistic nuances. Those are only a few of many specifics demonstrating that the translation of literary texts is a very complex intellectual and creative activity. The question arises as to whether the process can be adequately done by a statistical or neural machine translator. The aim of this study is to map the attitudes and opinions of a selected sample of professional literary translators in Slovakia regarding the use of NMTs and generative chatbots in the context of literary translation through explorative qualitative research. The study examines the participants' experiences with such tools and rationale concerning the potential advantages and disadvantages of employing NMTs and generative chatbots in literary translation. We believe that the results of our sociologically oriented research will offer both professional and academic milieux a partial yet valuable perspective on the potential advantages, disadvantages, and challenges associated with the use of NMTs and generative chatbots in literary translation, as viewed by professional translators in the Slovak context.

### A Brief Overview of the Development of Machine Translation and AI in the Context of Translation Studies

AI has a significant impact on the thinking of current society, both in our online and offline behaviour. It helps to automate processes in many industries but can also serve as a communication aide or personal entertainer. Long before AI started to be used for translation as a part of NMTs and generative chatbots (collectively referred to as "AI-driven tools") to analyse pieces of texts and even discuss possible solutions, there have been machine translators pairing the equivalents based on a given set of rules or language model. To understand how AI has influenced machine translation as we know it today, we will briefly map the rise of MT.

After the Second World War, when computers first started to be used, many researchers began to use them for translation and to simplify the work of human translators, if not to substitute them completely. The development of the first machine translators, according to Poibeau (2017), started around the 1950s with rule-based machine translators (translating either directly, offering dictionary-based word for word translation; transferring text with some syntactical analysis; and translating through a pivot language).Through the 1980s and 1990s, the poor results of rule-based systems resulted in a shift towards parallel corpora, sentence alignment and segmenting, such translator being known as statistical MTs, relied on large amounts of bilingual data and produced more precise results. The most recent development, emerging in the mid-2010s, is the deep-learning or neural machine translators relying on Large Language Models (LLMs) that allow even more precise results. Under LLM we understand "a neural network boasting an extensive array of parameters, often numbering in the billions, or even more [...] meticulously trained on copious amounts of unlabelled text through self-supervised learning" (Atkinson-Abutirdy, 2025, p. 6). Such model integrates "knowledge from textual sources, subsequently generating human-like responses and actively participating in meaningful conversations" (ibid.).

Besides SMTs, many of which transitioned to NMTs, translators can also use generative chatbots like ChatGPT or Gemini for translation, but besides simple results upon the given prompt, the outcomes of such tools can be a sum of a "collective process in which everyone is a contributor" (Ciesla, 2024, p. 2). Chatbots "can interact with customers in a natural and human-like way, providing them with information and answering their questions" (Hariri, 2025, p. 1). Chatbots can provide analysis and discuss possible equivalents, influencing the creative process.

Compared to CAT-tools, developed since the late 1960s (Chan, 2015), which facilitate the work of translators and might offer pre-translations based on the controlled and validated translation memory created by the translator or provided by the software, AI-driven translators are at the disposal of every layman. They contain varied amounts of data that might contribute to better results. Yet, when it comes to less-widely spoken lan-

guages, they often rely on English as a pivot language (Poibeau, 2017), distorting the precision of the given result, not to mention the smaller amount of data the model is built with (Ciesla, 2024).

The huge advancement of NMTs compared to SMTs lies in the way they operate. As mentioned, SMTs "are trained on parallel corpora that consist of aligned sentences in the source and target languages [...], learn statistical patterns and relationships between the source and target languages during training [...], estimating the most probable translation based on the learned statistical patterns" (Naveen & Trojovský, 2024, p. 2). However, NMT models "consist of encoder and decoder components, with attention mechanisms enabling the capture of contextual dependencies [...], learn to generate translations end-to-end without relying on explicit rule-based or statistical alignments. The advantage of NMT is its ability to handle long-range dependencies, capture context, and generate fluent translations" (ibid.).

Many researchers have focused on the comparison between SMT and NMT performance (Castilho et al. 2017, Sánchez-Gijón et al., 2019, Jassem & Dwojak, 2019, Petráš & Munková, 2023, etc.). Such research shows that human interference is inevitable, specifically when it comes to artfully rich and demanding texts. With the development of more sophisticated machine learning methods, research shows that the interest in SMTs and its performance reached a plateau and that NMTs, with major quality improvements (Koehn, 2020), is the new domain of machine translation. However, translation of literary texts represents a cognitively demanding process, and the employment of AI-driven tools needs further research.

## AI as an Inseparable Translation Research Interest

Naturally, the efficiency and challenges of the use of AI-driven tools have been and will remain a constant subject of translation-related research. It poses the question of whether AI will be a substitute for human thinking, and humans will remain only editors of machine-produced translations. Recent volumes and articles show the impact of AI-driven tools on translation workflow and their challenges. Jakobsen and Mesa-Lao (2017) elaborated on how written translation is being reshaped by MT; Moorkens et al. (2018) discussed human and machine translation quality assessment from several perspectives; Horváth (2022) focused on ethical aspects of AI in interpreting; Moniz and Escartín (2023) discussed ethical use of MT; Ciesla (2024) mapped chatbots and their performance; Zanaty (2024) explored the future of human translators in the emerging AI-driven translation landscape; Ye (2024) specifically pinpointed ChatGPT and its impact on the translation process; Chen (2024) proposed the potential use of AI in translation courses; and Shahmerdanova (2025) explored the transformative impact of AI on translation. Based on the given examples it is evident that the issue of AI-driven tools used for translation is currently being thoroughly researched from various angles – implementation (quality assurance), ethics, didactics, and sociology.

When it comes to genre-specific research, several studies have examined the performance of AI-driven tools across specific text types. Al-Romany and Kadhim (2024) investigated AI translation of legal texts, Andalib et al. (2025) AI translation of medical texts, Zhang (2025) compared human and AI translation of humorous subtitles, and Dewan (2025) analysed AI in poetry translation. Naturally, the more complex and creative the genre, the more challenges it possesses, and the less precise outcomes are provided. Despite the fact that a "generative AI model may have been trained on millions of individual works" (Buick, 2025, p. 184), the translator does not control the current amount of data the model is trained from or its correctness. The human factor remains an invaluable and inseparable part of translation of creatively demanding texts. This includes literary texts, characterised by numerous specific features on the linguistic level (writer's idiolect, figurative expressions and artistic techniques, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and stylistic features, as well as rhythm and musicality of the text) and at the extra-linguistic level (writer's intention, emotionality, allusions, cultural, historical, or political references, etc.). All of these factors can pose significant challenges to the application of AI-driven tools in the translation process. For this reason, we consider particularly worthwhile to investigate how professional literary translators in Slovakia perceive this issue.

## AI in Literary Translation – Problems, Challenges, Perspectives

Literary translation is a highly creative process and requires precision, specific equivalents and creative solutions. As Youdale (2020) notes, "it is in the unconventional ways that language is used that literary complexity

and originality are to be found" (Youdale, 2020, p. 15) A literary text can be understood as the manifestation of a communicative act, characterised by expressiveness, emotionality, and imagery. The translation of a literary text requires the selection of linguistic and stylistic elements that adequately convey not only the informational content but also the aesthetic value of the original in the target language (Palkovičová, 2015), such as specific features like style (Boase-Beier, 2014). As for the phases of the translation process (not only in literary translation), Vilikovský (1982) distinguishes between interpretation, conception, and reproduction. He understands interpretation as "a set of procedures that help to uncover the objective invariant of the original text" (Vilikovský, 1982, p. 35, own translation). Interpretation employs focus on the original and the source culture, whereas conception reflects primarily the aim and function of the translation in the target culture. In formulating the conception, the translator should uncover the ideas of the work, as well as the relationship between the author's intention and the objective idea, which must be reflected in the translated text (Huťková, 2003). When any literary text is translated, the translator should create a conception that arises from the conclusions drawn from the interpretation. By reproduction, Vilikovský (1982) means the translation proper – rendering of the text into a new expressive form of the target language and target culture. Based on our own long-standing practice in translating literary texts, we hold that interpretation and an optimally chosen conception are fundamental to literary translation. The question remains, however, whether these two phases – which are characterised by numerous specific features on both the linguistic and extralinguistic levels – can be adequately "handled" by AI-driven tools.

Indeed, some researchers have attempted to verify whether AI-driven tools are able to translate literary texts to the same quality as humans. Moorkens et al. (2018) conducted an experiment with six translators who translated texts from English to Catalan, and the results demonstrated a preference for translation from scratch; Youdale (2020) thoroughly investigated the use of computers in translation of literary style; and Hadley et al. (2022) focused on the relationship between literary (creative-text) translation and machine translation, with specific studies that indicate the increased interest in the comparison of AI-driven tools' performance in the translation of creative texts.

The question lies in determining whether AI can replace a human translator, specifically when literary translation is considered as "the last bastion of human translation" (Toral & Way, 2014, p. 174). This is a constant unspoken motivation that underlies such research, since AI-driven tools not only impact the quality of the target text, but also the industry tendencies and the profession as well. It is particularly important to carry out sociologically oriented research in which professional translators express their views on the issue, as they possess valuable understanding of the specifics of literary translation.

As mentioned, when considering literary translation, several factors must be taken into account, like author's idiolect, style, the emotionality of the text, target readers, functional equivalence, or conception. Translators need to master appropriate competencies (from research, interpretation and translation) to render a quality and equivalent translation. Regarding the use of AI-driven tools for less widely-spoken target languages (in our case Slovak), based on the language pair, it can be observed that the more exotic or less-frequent the language, the higher the probability of errors. As we mentioned, the amount of data pools of AI-driven tools depends on the resources the model has for the given language. If the data resources are more limited, there are tendencies to use higher-resource languages like English as a pivot language to provide more precise results (Karakanta et al., 2018). Besides the potential errors AI-driven tools may produce, ensuring that users receive authentic and creatively appropriate solutions requires large language models to be trained on literary texts. However, such training raises not only copyright concerns (Buick, 2025), since authorization and consent are necessary, but also moral and practical questions: if models are trained on literary texts, to what extent will the resulting translations be adequate? Such translation demands post-editing – that is, human intervention – which may ultimately consume as much time as, or even twice the time of, a rendition from scratch.

These and similar concerning issues sparked our interest in the use of AI-driven tools for the translation of literary texts into Slovak, with an aim to investigate the sociological aspect of their use – if and how Slovak translators work with AI-driven tools, how the tools impact the translators' workflow, what translators think of the tools, and how the tools influence the profession of a literary translator. While no similar research has yet been conducted in the Slovak academic milieu, there are linguistic-oriented and descriptive works such as

those by Kunecová and Petrovová (2021), Vaňko (2023), Petráš and Munková (2023) or Kabát (2024). A thorough sociological study mapping the situation on the Slovak market has been lacking, and only non-specific and more generic results can be seen, e.g. in CEATL's surveys on working conditions of European literary translators (2020), which prompted the conduct of this research.

## Methodology

In this study, we present the results of explorative qualitative research via focus groups with translators of fiction. The meeting was held virtually in April 2025 using Zoom and lasted ninety minutes. We invited ten established male and female literary translators to participate in the study, and six of them agreed to take part in the focus group. The selection of participants was based on the official list of literary translators and editors compiled by the Slovak professional organization Doslov (see https://www.doslov.sk/), which is a member of the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL). Doslov is currently the only active organization in Slovakia that brings together literary translators and editors and supports their professional development. We also invited male literary translators to participate in the focus group; however, only female translators ultimately took part in the interview. This specificity is consistent with the findings of a recent survey conducted by the professional organization Doslov (Tyšš Rondziková, 2025), which examined the current state and characteristics of the profession of literary translators in Slovakia. According to the survey results, which included 107 respondents, literary translation in Slovakia is practiced predominantly by women (88.8%) rather than men (11.2%). We believe that this demographic pattern also influenced the composition of our research sample, although our primary aim was not to include only female translators in the focus group.

The criteria for participation in the focus group required that the participants be professionally engaged in translating fiction from foreign languages into Slovak (with an emphasis on selecting translators working from multiple source languages), hold the status of established literary translators with demonstrable experience in the form of at least five published book translations, possess relevant professional qualifications (such as a university degree in a related field), and be active and recognised members of the professional literary translation community. The research sample consists of established female literary translators, most of whom significantly exceed the minimum publication criterion. Specifically, P1 has translated 50 books during her professional career, P2 has translated 25 books, P3 has translated 50 books, P4 has translated 20 books, and P5 and P6 have each translated 10 books. The professional standing of the translators is further evidenced by their long-term collaboration with prestigious Slovak publishing houses with a long publishing tradition (including Tatran, operating since 1947; Ikar, operating since 1990; Inaque, operating since 2012; among others). Moreover, some of the participants hold positions on the executive board of the professional translators' organisation Doslov (P2, P3), and several regularly contribute to the organisation of workshops and professional seminars for the translation community (P1, P2, P3, P6). The quality of their work is also reflected in the recognition received, as some of their translations have been awarded the Ján Hollý Prize for literary translation (P3, P4)[1]. The focus group discussion was moderated by one of the co-authors of this study.

The focus group interview reflected the following topics and questions:

***Biographic part***

- Educational background and field of specialisation
- Years of professional translation experience
- Source languages translated from
- Literary genres translated

***Attitudes, opinions and experience with AI-driven tools***

- Participants' experience with AI-driven tools in the translation of literary texts
- If applicable, the stage(s) of the translation process in which such tools are employed

[1] The Ján Hollý Prize has been awarded since 1967, and the Committee of the Section for Literary Translation regards it as the highest recognition of translation work in the field of literary literature in Slovakia.

- Participants' attitude toward the use of AI-driven tools in literary translation in general, including their advantages and disadvantages
- Discussion of whether AI-driven tools could potentially replace literary translators in the future, and factors that might influence such replacement

The aim of our research was to investigate how professional literary translators in Slovakia perceive AI-driven tools and their use in literary translation, the experience with such tools, opinions on potential risks and the role of these tools in the translation process and the profession. Data were collected via a focus group discussion with six female established literary translators, who shared their experiences, opinions, and professional perspectives on the use of AI-driven tools in literary translation. Despite the limited research sample, we believe that the collected perspectives provide fruitful insights into the issue of the use of AI-driven tools in literary translation and the implications for literary translation within the Slovak context.

At the end of the interview, the moderator provided the participants with the opportunity to comment on any of the questions and the issues discussed.

## Results and Discussion

In the following section of our study, we focus on the analysis of findings and results, which we categorize into several groups. The first group concerns basic biographical characteristics, including information on participants' educational background and field of study, years of professional translation experience, source languages translated from, and literary genres translated.

All participants (hereinafter abbreviated as "P") are graduates in translation studies, with specializations across various language combinations. P1 studied at Comenius University in Bratislava, obtained a Master's degree in English language and culture and Russian language and culture, followed by a Doctoral degree in Slavic Studies. P2 studied at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, obtained Master's degree in English language and culture and German language and culture. P3 studied at Comenius University in Bratislava, obtained a Master's degree in English language and Portuguese language and culture. P4 studied at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, obtained a Master's degree in English language and culture and Russian language and culture, followed by a Doctoral degree in Translation Studies. P5 studied at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, obtained a Master's degree in English language and culture and German language and culture. P6 studied at Comenius University in Bratislava, obtained a Master's degree in German language and culture and Croatian language and culture, followed by a Doctoral degree in Slavic Studies (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1** Educational background and field of specialisation of participants.

| Translation studies graduates | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Master's degree in English language and culture and Russian language and culture | X | | | X | | |
| Master's degree in English language and culture and German language and culture | | X | | | X | |
| Master's degree in English language and Portuguese language and culture | | | X | | | |
| Master's degree in German language and culture and Croatian language and culture | | | | | | X |
| Doctoral degree in Slavic Studies | X | | | | | X |
| Doctoral degree in Translation Studies | | | | X | | |

Regarding the years of professional translation experience, the range spanned from 4 years (P5) to 18 years (P3). The participants' average professional experience is ten years, which demonstrates that they are established and experienced translators (see **Fig. 1**).

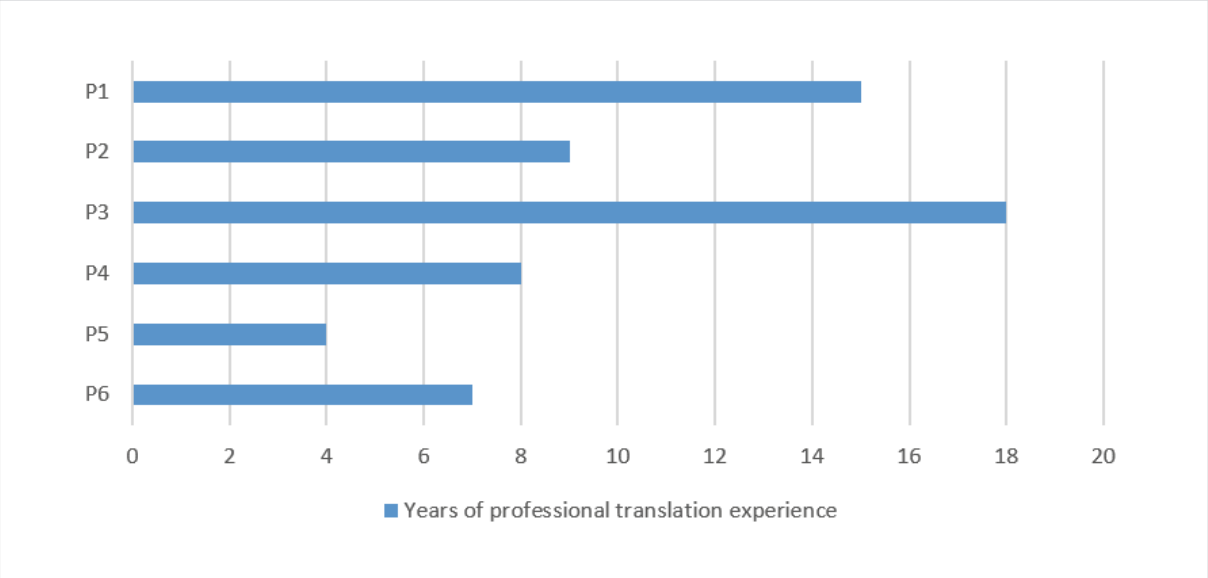


**Fig. 1** Years of professional translation experience of participants

The most frequent language our participants translate from is English (P1, P2, P3, P4), followed by German (P2, P6), Polish (P2), Czech (P5), Portuguese (P3), Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian (P6) (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2** Source languages translated from.

| | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | X | X | X | X | | |
| German | | X | | | | X |
| Polish | | X | | | | |
| Czech | | | | | X | |
| Portuguese | | | X | | | |
| Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian | | | | | | X |

The participants have experience across a range of literary genres – from non-fiction (P1, P4) and children's literature (P1, P2, P3, P5), to genre literature like crime fiction, fantasy or social novels (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6) (see **Table 3**).

**Table 3** Literary genres translated.

| | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Fiction | X | | | X | | |
| Children's Literature | X | X | X | | X | |
| Genre Literature (Crime Fiction, Fantasy, Social Novels) | X | X | X | X | | X |

The next part of our interview focused on attitudes, opinions and experience of our participants with AI-driven tools in literary translation. We recorded a range of perspectives and recommendations from the participants, which we will subject to a more detailed analysis. In the translation of fiction, P1 does not use NMTs like Google Translate or DeepL, and claims that post-editing of texts translated by such tools would consume more time than it would take her to translate the text from scratch. However, she uses generative chatbot ChatGPT when in need of explaining specific terms she deems unclear, such as during the search for an appropriate phraseological unit to render slang expressions or functional rhymes (verses). According to her, the advantage of the use of such tools consists in the tools' ability to quickly retrieve information, provided that the chatbot receives a prompt with a detailed specification of the request. P1 noted that during the use of ChatGPT, it is necessary to request the source of retrieved data, so she can then verify their trustworthiness. She has had the experience of ChatGPT providing a non-existent source.

P4 uses DeepL when in need of a draft translation. According to her, post-editing of a text (not self-produced, including machine translation) is cognitively more demanding than translation from scratch, thus she does not consider it effective. With regard to generative chatbots, she utilises Perplexity for fact-finding and the premium version of ChatGPT. However, she noted that, in her experience, ChatGPT tends to produce "overly creative" results. She explained that when the tool does not have sufficient information, it fills gaps by synthesizing or combining fragments from various sources. For her, this blending of information leads to results that may appear imaginative rather than accurate, which she perceives as a disadvantage in the context of literary translation. P4 employs the tool if she needs retelling or re-stylisation of a sentence in English (she considers ChatGPT a more effective tool for translation into English, as when used for translation into Slovak, the tool often confuses Slovak with Czech).

Since P5 specialises in the translation of children's literature, she considers AI-driven tools useless, and does not use them. However, P5 experiments with ChatGPT when she fails to find information through other search engines. She reports a positive experience with its use in this context.

When translating fiction, P2, P3 and P6 reported not using generative chatbots for literary translation, and some have never employed it. P6 has never used ChatGPT for literary translation. She occasionally experimented with Google Translate to assess how efficiently it translates texts to and from less widely-spoken languages (e.g. Slovak and Croatian). P6 observed that the tool can be used to translate separated lexemes (since bilingual dictionaries for the Slovak–Croatian language pair are often of insufficient quality), but in the translation of longer extracts the subsequent post-editing would consume a lot of time compared with translation from scratch. P6 stated that the situation is better than before, but she still cannot and does not want to rely on similar tools and translators.

Since the discovery of DeepL, P2 stopped using Google Translate, and considers DeepL a better tool. Its efficiency, however, depends on the language pair DeepL is being used for. In the translation from German into Slovak, texts translated by DeepL contain a lot of errors, the provided results are too simple or some parts of text omitted. In that case, P2 must verify DeepL's performance, which limits the tool's practical utility for translation. P2 uses it occasionally for translation from English to Slovak, particularly in the search for equivalents, synonyms, or other lexical units. In regard to generative chatbots, she does not engage with tools like ChatGPT mostly for ecological reasons and because she currently does not translate works that would benefit from its use.

P3 has not used ChatGPT yet. She agrees with P2, that the tool is often used for the retrieval of minor or non-essential information, and considers it a waste of resources. P3 stated that, throughout her long-term practice, she has not encountered any issues that could not be resolved using what she referred to as "traditional methods." By this, she meant the logical and systematic processes that professional translators follow, such as consulting bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, consulting professional forums, or seeking advice from domain experts (e.g., managers or specialists in technical fields). These methods, according to P3, provide more reliable information than the reliance on AI tools based on simple prompts, especially when precise or technical knowledge is required. She has certain experience with DeepL which she once used under time pressure to translate several pages of text, but it neither accelerated her workflow, nor made it effective. According to her, the disadvantages of DeepL include gender bias or inconsistencies and the flattening of language to a standardized level. According to P3, when a source literary text is stylistically limited, DeepL is able to handle the translation relatively well (see **Table 4**).

**Table 4** Experience with AI-driven tools in the translation of literary texts.

| | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regular use of generative chatbots | | | | | | |
| Occasional use of generative chatbots | X | | | X | X | |
| No use of generative chatbots | | X | X | | | X |
| Regular use of NMTs | | | | | | |
| Occasional use of NMTs | | X | | X | | X |
| No use of NMTs | X | | X | | X | |

The next section of the interview focused on questions related to the use of AI-driven tools in literary translation and their advantages and disadvantages.

P3 stated that if the translator cannot rely on traditional research techniques to translate a specific sentence (or a phrase) satisfactorily, she can imagine that AI-driven tools can be helpful, but with a risk of language flattening. According to her, the disadvantage is that if a translator relies excessively on AI-driven tools, the resulting translation may be inadequate both semantically and stylistically. P3 considers AI (ChatGPT) merely as a tool, not as an end in itself.

P2 opines that a notable strength of DeepL is that the tool indeed can accelerate the translation process provided that the source text is relatively simple and formulaic, but this does not hold true for literary texts. When using AI-driven tools in literary translation, there is a risk of inconsistencies and the flattening of style (author's idiolect) to such an extent that it could be lost entirely – the individual books would contain a standardized language and lack the added value. P2 considers the process of translating literary texts as a form of entertainment. If a translator lacked that or provided insufficient post-editing of a text produced by AI-driven tools and would be satisfied with that, it could further endanger a profession already under threat in Slovakia (among other things, due to low rates). P2 reflected on a "worst-case scenario" in which, in the future, individuals with the ability to input text into a translation tool and edit it sufficiently to produce a relatively readable and usable output could perform translations.

P1 pointed out that if a translator can use AI-driven tools to make their work efficient and faster, the use of such tools is justified. Similarly to P3 and P2, she considers inconsistency in translation choices and the hypnotic effect of the text as potential pitfalls of such translation. According to P1, tools like ChatGPT should be used responsibly and with consideration of all potential risks.

P5 agreed with the previous statements. She regards the quick and efficient assistance provided by ChatGPT as an advantage; however, in her view, the human factor remains indispensable. Despite unfavourable forecasts, she does not think that AI can fully replace literary translators in near future.

According to P6, the market and publishing houses have been and will remain central to this matter. Even today, there are publishers in Slovakia who do not approach text editing responsibly, on the other hand, there are publishers who prioritize and ensure high-quality text editing. Reader preferences also play an important role. It is uncertain whether readers will require translations of high literary quality or will settle for popular or recreational literature. P6 agrees with the opinion that AI-driven tools can be used as friends-in-need, but it remains paramount to verify the results provided by these tools, and it is especially important to incorporate considerations of the associated risks in the training of future translators.

P4 deems the use of ChatGPT an ethical and ecological problem (mostly with respect to resource use). For her, translation is an intellectual entertainment, and she does not wish to be deprived of this activity. Regarding the use of machine translation in the education of future translators, she noted that she is concerned about such facilitation of work, as students do not learn to think critically, skip the crucial interpretation phase, and often remain unaware of its importance.

The final set of interview questions addressed the issue of whether, in the future, AI-driven tools could replace literary translators. According to P2, since she does not use AI for translation, she does not have an opinion on its use in translation. Despite that she contemplated whether, in the near or long-term future, tool-assisted and post-edited translations will become standard, stating that the adoption of such translations will largely be determined by publishers and readers alike.

P3 noted that besides publishing houses and readers, authors are also responsible for the outcomes of the aforementioned issue, as they will express whether they consent to their books being translated with the assistance of AI. Literary translation could potentially evolve into a narrower, craft-focused field.

According to P1 it is hard to predict whether AI will be able to replace literary translators in the future. It can be assumed that AI will improve and translate specific nuances of the language more skilfully, yet, as AI cannot feel and grasp the emotion of the text, it cannot fully substitute human translators in the near future.

P4 pointed out that AI is not specific enough for translation. Even translators may encounter difficulties in the comprehension and transfer of the author's intention or the emotion of the text. After all, humans are not infallible. According to P4, in future, it is humans who will be an added value. It is also possible that the renowned traditional publishing houses will reject AI-driven translation of books and small publishing houses will, on the contrary, use AI-driven tools, attempting to reduce costs.

P5 is optimistic and thinks that human translators will be "rare" and an added value, because they are able to work with language and text in an adequate and irreplaceable manner.

P6 thought about the opinions of P4 and P3 agrees that it would be ideal if translators in this regard were consistently sought after and remained irreplaceable, but that everything will be in the hands of publishers, who operate according to market demands. She also raised a concern in relation to the sustainability of the profession in the future – whether it will be possible to translate literary texts only and to make a living from literary translation. She thinks that it is necessary that translators talk about the advantages and disadvantages of AI.

As AI increasingly influences the translation process, and the use of AI-driven tools is likely to become more widespread in the future, it is important that members of the translation community address this topic adequately. Despite the limited size of the sample of our explorative qualitative research, this study represents the first sociological research in Slovakia of its kind, specifically focusing on the issue of AI-driven tools in literary translation, and we believe that our findings will help to reveal potential areas and ways of using AI in literary translation, including risks and problematic aspects.

The present study, particularly the first phase whose findings are presented herein, will be followed by a questionnaire focused on the opinions of literary translators about AI-driven tools and their use. The questionnaire will be distributed to a wide sample of literary translators in Slovakia.

## Conclusion

In this study, we examined the issue of AI-driven tools and their use from the viewpoint of six female translators of fiction in Slovakia. With the increased role of technology and AI in the translation industry, this topic is highly relevant, posing a range of unresolved questions, problems, and challenges.

We performed explorative qualitative research via a focus group with six participants, all of whom were professional literary translators with experience spanning from 4 to 18 years, translating fiction from English, German, Portuguese, Polish, Czech, Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian language to Slovak. The participants translate a variety of genre literature (crime fiction, fantasy, social novels), children's literature and non-fiction.

With respect to the employment or non-employment of AI-driven tools, it can be asserted that participants P1, P4, P5 partially use generative chatbots like ChatGPT or Perplexity mostly during the research stage of the translation process in order to find facts or look for a specific linguistic equivalent, synonym or phraseological units. It is essential to precisely formulate the prompt and to verify the trustworthiness of the resources AI-driven tools work with. Half of the participants (P2, P3, P6) do not use generative chatbots, mostly for ethical and ecological reasons.

When it comes to NMTs like Google Translate or DeepL, P1, P3 and P5 do not utilize them, because the post-editing of such translated texts would take longer than translation from scratch. P2, P4, P6 use them occasionally for a draft translation, to get inspiration for equivalents, synonyms, etc., or during translation of specific equivalents to and from less widely spoken languages. They pointed out that, depending on the language pair, the results differ, and such tools, when translating longer extracts, often provide inadequate results both semantically and stylistically. The use of such tools is thus inefficient.

The participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6) named several disadvantages and partial advantages related to the use of AI-driven tools in literary translation. The key problematic factors may be outlined as follows: flattening of the target language, inconsistencies of translation solutions and the loss of the author's idiolect. The participants also pointed out the importance of the responsible use of AI-driven tools, including ethical principles. If a translator realizes these "risks", they can imagine that generative chatbots like ChatGPT can be helpful in specific cases, mostly in the research stage of the translation process, e.g. in the search for adequate equivalents, synonyms, etc. The participants unanimously agreed that AI cannot presently substitute human translators in literary contexts, given its insufficient capacity to understand authorial intent and to recognize the emotional dimensions of a text. It is possible that, in the future, literary translation will evolve into a craft-focused field, and a human translator will represent an added value. However, in the Slovak context (as well as more generally), publishers, together with authors and readers, will play a crucial role in this regard, as their attitudes toward the use or non-use of AI-driven tools in literary translation will be decisive.

From the conducted qualitative research, it can be concluded that half of the participants partially use AI tools and neural machine translators primarily in the preparatory phase, for the purpose of verifying information and facts, and occasionally in the search for specific linguistic solutions (equivalents, synonyms, idiomatic expressions), based on the language combination. However, they do not use these tools during the actual translation process (i.e., translating longer passages or sections of text), due to inefficiency as well as ethical and ecological considerations. According to the participants, the disadvantages and risks of using AI tools and neural machine translators in literary translation include the flattening of the target language, inconsistency in translation choices, and the loss of the author's idiolect. They maintain that AI tools cannot replace human literary translators, as they are unable to preserve the author's intent and convey the emotional depth of the text. When ethical principles are respected, they can, however, envision partial use of AI tools, particularly in the preparatory phase of translation.

We acknowledge that the presented qualitative research is limited by the size of the sample. Nonetheless, we believe that the analysis of the attitudes and opinions of six female established professional literary translators is of utmost importance, as translators with long-term experience possess the deepest understanding of the translation process. Their perspectives are essential for identifying issues that may shape the future of the translation profession. This study represents the first phase of research, which will be followed by a quantitative survey involving a broader and more representative sample of Slovak professional literary trans-

lators. The subsequent study will expand on the findings presented here and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and experiences of Slovak literary translators with AI tools.

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**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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## Santrauka

**Mária Koscelníková, Andrej Zahorák.**
**Dirbtinis intelektas ir jo vaidmuo grožinės literatūros vertime šešių slovakų literatūros vertėjų požiūriu – taip ar ne?**

Per pastarąjį dešimtmetį dirbtinis intelektas (DI) tapo neatskiriama vertimo praktikos dalimi. Publikuota mokslinių darbų apie DI vaidmenį vertimo procese (Moorkens et al., 2018; Youdale, 2020; Shahmerdanova, 2025), vertimo ateitį DI eroje (Zanaty, 2024; Ye, 2024), DI švietime (Yu & Lu, 2021; Chen, 2024) ir daugelį kitų panašių temų. Svarbu suprasti, ar ir kaip DI naudojamas literatūros tekstų vertimuose, nes tai yra labai kūrybinis procesas (Hadley et al., 2022), kuris negali remtis bendrais DI įrankių atsakymais. Kalbant apie mažiau paplitusias kalbas, pavyzdžiui, slovakų, neuroninio mašininio vertimo programų naudojimas gali nepalengvinti proceso, o, atvirkščiai, jį pasunkinti. Šiame tyrime iš sociologinės perspektyvos nagrinėjami profesionalių literatūros vertėjų požiūriai, nuomonės ir patirtis, susijusi su neuroninio mašininio vertimo programų ir generatyvinių pokalbių robotų naudojimu literatūros vertimuose. Pirmojoje kokybinio tyrimo fazėje (naudojant fokusuotos grupės metodą) pateikiame rezultatus, susijusius su DI įrankių naudojimu literatūros vertime iš užsienio kalbų į slovakų kalbą, mašininio vertimo įtaką vertimo procesui ir mašininio vertimo privalumus bei trūkumus profesionalių vertėjų požiūriu. Kadangi Slovakijoje panašių tyrimų nėra atlikta, manome, kad mūsų rezultatai bent iš dalies atspindi DI privalumus, trūkumus ir probleminius aspektus literatūros vertime iš užsienio kalbų profesionalų požiūriu, įskaitant rekomendacijas dėl gerosios praktikos.

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