# EVOLVING L2 TRANSLATION COMPETENCE IN LIGHT OF TECHNOLOGICAL TURN

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the evolving landscape of second language (L2) translation competence in the context of technological advancements, particularly the impact of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and large language models. It addresses the growing need for L2 translation in response to globalization, the prominence of English as a global lingua franca, and market demands. The paper critically examines traditional views on directionality, notably the native-speaker principle, and explores how translator training must adapt to equip students with both linguistic and technological competences. A key focus is the integration of translation technologies, such as neural machine translation and GenAI, into translator training programs. It emphasizes the importance of developing critical digital literacy, ethical awareness, and adaptability, alongside traditional linguistic skills. The paper also offers practical training strategies and classroom activities to foster L2 translation competence, encouraging students to engage critically with technological tools while preserving the communicative intent of the text. In conclusion, the paper advocates for a dynamic, integrative approach to translation competence that prepares future professionals to navigate and leverage technological innovations in the translation field.

**Keywords:** L2 translation; generative artificial intelligence; translation competence; directionality in translation; machine translation; translation technology; translation strategies in translator training

## 1. Introduction

The rapid transformation of contemporary societies and workplaces has intensified calls for educational systems to cultivate transferable 21st-century skills – such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and digital literacy. This need has become even more urgent with the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and large language models (LLMs), which are expected to reshape knowledge-based professions, including translation. As Khogali and Mekid (2023) observe, AI and automation are poised to significantly alter or even eliminate many existing jobs. Pym and Hao (2025) further argue that understanding AI's capabilities, limitations, and ethical dimensions is

now a key educational objective. In this context, questions surrounding competence and skill development as well as translation competence have gained renewed importance (Pellegrino 2014; Kruk & Kałużna 2025).

Alongside these technological changes, globalization and increasing international cooperation have heightened the demand for professional translators, who serve as essential mediators of cross-cultural communication in fields such as commerce, diplomacy, literature, and technology. To meet this demand, translators must combine domain-specific expertise with a range of translation competences, including technological proficiency (EMT 2022). As Pym and Hao (2025) remind us, online tools will only continue to improve – and so must the ability of students, educators, and practitioners to work effectively with them.

The rise of English as a global lingua franca has also led to a growing emphasis on L2 translation, particularly in countries with languages of limited diffusion. In the Czech Republic, for instance, translation programs have traditionally adhered to Newmark's (1988) native-speaker principle, privileging translation into the mother tongue. Nonetheless, market realities have long rendered L2 translation an unavoidable necessity, as native speakers continue to be absent from the majority of translation from Czech into English (cf. also Ličko 2014).

Against this backdrop of technological advancement and shifting training paradigms, the present paper offers several preliminary suggestions for enhancing L2 translator training at the undergraduate level, with particular emphasis on developing translation-technology competence. The discussion is grounded in the author's classroom experience with first-year translation majors who arrive with minimal practice in either L1- or L2-directed translation and virtually no prior exposure to machine-translation systems or other AI-driven tools. By analysing the challenges these novice translators encounter and the interventions that proved most effective, the paper seeks to provide a pragmatic, scalable framework for integrating technology-focused tasks into undergraduate curricula of translation.

## 2. Directionality in translation:
## Theoretical perspectives and practical realities

The question of directionality – whether translators should work exclusively into their native language (L1) or whether they can also translate into a second language (L2) – has long been a contentious issue in both translation practice and academia. Traditionally, translation theory has upheld the native-speaker principle. However, with globalization, the increasing role of English as a lingua franca, and growing market demands, L2 translation has become not only a frequent practice but, in some contexts, an unavoidable necessity.

Peter Newmark's early prescriptive stance epitomizes the classical rejection of L2 translation. He asserted that translators should work exclusively into their language of habitual use, arguing that this is the only way to ensure naturalness, accuracy, and effectiveness (Newmark 1988). This perspective, deeply ingrained in translation studies and professional guidelines, reinforced the belief that non-native translation could compromise

quality. However, even Newmark later revised his position, acknowledging that in certain situations – particularly in countries with languages of limited diffusion – L2 translation may be the only viable option. He conceded that a competent non-native translator might even outperform an incompetent native speaker (Newmark 1997).

The need for L2 translation has been particularly pronounced in regions where English serves as the dominant target language for translation, yet the availability of native English-speaking translators is limited. Beeby (1998) highlights that the 20th century saw a surge in translation into English due to its status as the primary language of trade, science, and media. The market demand for English translations often surpasses the supply of native English translators, making L2 translation an unavoidable reality in many professional settings.

The increasing presence of L2 translation in professional settings has also led to calls for systematic training in L2 translation. The European Master's in Translation (EMT Board 2017) acknowledges that the traditional native-speaker principle may no longer be universally applicable. In similar vein, Mraček (2024) suggests that despite the continued prevalence of the native-speaker principle in translator training programs, the realities of translation markets show a growing tolerance for L2 translation, particularly among translation clients. This trend has been documented in multiple studies across Eastern European countries, including Slovakia (Ličko 2014), Poland (Whyatt & Kościuczuk 2013), Croatia (Pavlović 2007), as well as the Czech Republic (Duběda, Mraček, & Obdržálková 2018).

The academic discourse on directionality has evolved alongside these market shifts. Early scholarship was predominantly prescriptive, warning against the risks of L2 translation – despite the fact that non-native translation was a common practice in most countries (Newmark 1988). However, contemporary research has taken a more descriptive approach, investigating actual translation practices, the role of bilingual competence, and strategies employed by L2 translators to mitigate potential deficiencies (Ličko 2014). Studies have shown that successful L2 translators often compensate for their non-nativeness through rigorous research, extensive revision, consultation with native speakers (Pokorn 2005; Kościuczuk 2016), as well as the use of language technologies (Pym & Hao 2025). Furthermore, some argue that non-native translators may even bring advantages to the task, such as simplifying language for international audiences and reducing culturally bound references that might hinder comprehension (cf. Klabal 2024).

In sum, the debate on directionality remains a central issue in translation studies, shaped by both theoretical considerations and practical constraints. As the need for competent L2 translation continues to grow, translator training programs must adapt to equip students with the necessary skills and strategies to navigate this professional reality (Kenny 2020).

## 3. Translation technologies

The integration of technology into translator training reflects a broader historical evolution of language tools that have shaped not only how we communicate, but also how we teach and learn translation (Pym & Hao 2025). Among the most influential develop-

ments in recent decades is the rise of machine translation (MT), which has undergone significant transformations – from early rule-based systems and statistical approaches to today's widely used neural machine translation (NMT). NMT, based on deep learning models, has markedly improved the fluency and usability of automatically generated translations in many language pairs, making it a ubiquitous tool for both professionals and language learners (Koehn 2020). It has also brought new challenges, particularly in translator training, where students must now develop skills in pre-editing and post-editing, evaluate MT quality critically, and understand when and how to integrate MT effectively into their workflows (O'Brien 2023).

More recently, the emergence of GenAI, powered by LLMs, has further expanded the landscape of translator training and language education. Unlike traditional MT, which relies heavily on parallel corpora and seeks equivalence at the sentence or phrase level, GenAI systems can perform a much broader range of tasks – from generating coherent texts from prompts and simplifying or adapting texts for specific audiences to offering stylistic alternatives and cultural explanations. These systems are based on predictive language modelling rather than strict translation algorithms, and their outputs reflect statistical likelihood rather than linguistic rules or equivalence. While GenAI tools can sometimes mimic translation behaviour, they differ significantly in their flexibility, interactivity, and creative potential (Pym & Hao 2025).

For translator training, both NMT and GenAI present opportunities and responsibilities. On the one hand, they offer learners access to vast linguistic resources, exposure to different stylistic solutions, and scaffolding for language production that can enhance autonomy and creativity. On the other hand, they necessitate a critical pedagogical approach – one that trains students not only to assess the adequacy and appropriateness of machine-generated output but also to preserve voice, intent, and communicative purpose in the final text. Ultimately, these technologies should be seen not as replacements for human translation but as powerful augmentative tools. Their role in the classroom lies in fostering informed, reflective, and skilled translators who can navigate and leverage technological change while maintaining professional and ethical standards (O'Brien 2023).

## 4. Evolving translation competence

In translator training, one of the earliest and most influential frameworks for conceptualizing translation competence was developed by the PACTE group, formed in the late 1990s at the initiative of Amparo Hurtado Albir (PACTE, 2022). The PACTE model (2000, 2003, 2017) approached translation competence as a multi-componential construct designed to improve university-level translator training. One of its key components was the *instrumental sub-competence*, which included the ability to use documentation and communication tools such as digital dictionaries, corpora, encyclopedias, style sheets, parallel texts, email, and the internet (PACTE 2000: 101). At the time, this was a pioneering step that aligned with the early awareness of the growing importance of technology in translation (O'Brien 2002). However, despite significant technological advances, PACTE's model remained relatively static over the years. While "electronic

corpora" received a brief mention early on (PACTE 2003: 59), key technologies such as translation memory suites were largely absent from their empirical studies. The term "assisted translation software" only appeared in a list of skills two decades after the first version of the model (PACTE 2020: 103).

In contrast, the European Masters in Translation (EMT), established in 2006 by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation, responded more dynamically to evolving professional and technological demands. Designed as a quality label for postgraduate programs that meet specific training criteria, the EMT model offered a progressively updated vision of the competences required for modern translation work. In its 2009 version, the EMT Expert Group expanded the scope of instrumental competence to include a broader range of translation-specific tools – such as MT, translation memory suites, terminology databases, and specialized tools for audiovisual translation (Hurtado Albir 2020). This iteration also acknowledged the need for skills such as post-editing in L1 and L2, formatting, managing different file formats, and critically assessing the potential and limitations of MT.

These trends continued in the revised EMT model of 2017 (EMT 2017), which maintained a focus on evolving translation technologies while introducing a stronger emphasis on *personal and interpersonal* competences – skills less likely to be automated and increasingly valued in collaborative professional settings. Teamwork, in particular, was foregrounded as translators were seen to be working more frequently in networked environments, where communication technologies play a vital role. These tools, once part of the PACTE model's instrumental sub-competence, were now deeply embedded in collaborative workflows.

The 2022 update of the EMT framework (EMT 2022) reflects a further shift toward critical engagement with technology. In addition to technical know-how, it emphasizes *critical digital literacy* – the ability to evaluate the relevance of technologies in specific contexts – as well as awareness of ethics, copyright, and data security. Newly introduced components include *data literacy* and the use of automatic quality assurance software that can detect typological inconsistencies between source and target texts (e.g., unmatched punctuation, formatting tags, or sentence length). These additions mirror the growing complexity of translation environments, where digital workflows increasingly depend on multiple, interlocking tools. At the same time, two personal competences are highlighted: *lifelong learning* and *cognitive-load management*. The emphasis on continuous learning reflects the fast-changing nature of translation technology and the need for professionals to adapt to new tools and practices.

This growing complexity necessitates a shift in how translation competence is understood and assessed. While early models like PACTE treated technological skills as supplementary, recent research highlights the need for more integrated approaches. Instrumental translation competence (ITC) is now central to translator training and professional practice (e.g. Hurtado Albir et al. 2020; PACTE 2003), particularly as technologies such as NMT continue to evolve (Prieto Ramos 2024; Koehn 2020). At the same time, the complexity of assessing translation competence remains a challenge due to linguistic, cultural, and evaluative variability (Colina 2008). New approaches to assessment, increasingly supported by CAT tools (Austermühl 2001; EMT 2022), aim to better align training with the expectations of the professional field.

Overall, the evolution from PACTE's relatively stable notion of instrumental sub-competence to the EMT framework's nuanced and evolving account of technological, interpersonal, and critical competences reflects broader trends in translator training and labour. Technology skills are no longer merely operational; they are reshaping how translation is conceptualized, taught, and practiced. In this new landscape, translation competence must be understood as a dynamic, integrative construct – one that prepares professionals not only to *use* technology, but to engage with it critically, ethically, and adaptively.

## 5. L2 Translation competence in the classroom and beyond

### *5.1 Guidelines for translating pragmatic texts into a L2*

Prior to the advent of NMT and GenAI, scholars recommended that translators working into a L2 adopt a restricted or controlled form of language, i.e. language which avoids potential for ambiguity and misinterpretation through a limiting of available forms of expression (O'Brien 2002). According to Rupp and Götz (as cited in Adab 2005: 234), ambiguity in L2 translation may result from linguistic challenges – such as polysemy, incorrect word order, faulty collocations, or incorrect use of articles, quantifiers, or tenses – as well as from conceptual vagueness or metaphorical frameworks. On the other hand, ambiguity can be compensated by native speaker subconscious disambiguation or reader assumptions based on factors of communicative event.

Adab (2005: 235) offers a set of practical guidelines for translators of pragmatic texts working into their L2. Operating within a controlled language framework, translators can ensure clarity and acceptability across audiences. The core principles include:

– *Be explicit.* Don't assume background or situational knowledge beyond the specific domain. Each reference or term should be clear and unambiguous, leaving no room for multiple interpretations.
– *Use standard terminology.* Stick to domain-specific terms that have clear definitions within an established system or taxonomy.
– *Prefer direct language.* Choose conventional, explicit sentence structures over indirect or ambiguous ones to ensure clarity of intent (especially for requests, instructions, etc.).
– *Keep the vocabulary focused.* Specialized fields often use a limited set of terms. Avoid synonyms that might confuse the message.
– *Choose predictable collocations.* Use word combinations typical of the domain to enhance comprehension and clarity.
– *Avoid stylistic variation.* Unlike literary texts, pragmatic texts (e.g. manuals, instructions, policies) do not aim for elegance or variety. Their main purpose is to inform or guide.
– *Be cautious with persuasive texts.* Translating advertising or promotional texts into a L2 is not advised unless the translator has marketing expertise in that language. Even when translating into one's first language (L1), subject-matter expertise is crucial.

- *Use standard sentence patterns.* Syntactic options are usually more limited in specialized texts, and conventions are well established.
- *Embrace repetition.* Repeating key terms increases cohesion and clarity, especially in technical or instructional content.

These principles remain highly relevant today, even as translation technologies evolve. In educational contexts, they provide a solid foundation for developing L2 translation competence that prioritizes clarity, coherence, and communicative function. On the other hand, it needs to be said that for undergraduate students such guidelines might be difficult to grasp and apply in practice. Consider, for example, what it implies to state that *stylistic variation should be avoided* or *direct language is preferred* when using restricted language. Thus, each principle needs to be supported by hands-on activities, examples and the adjustment of scaffolding (Pym & Hao 2025).

This orientation resonates with recent discussions of Human-Centred AI (Jiménez-Crespo 2025), which emphasise human control, autonomy, and added value in AI-rich workflows. Rather than framing AI as a substitute for human agency, the activities described below adopt an augmentation perspective in which technology serves as a support for, rather than a replacement of, trainees' developing competences.

## 6. From theory to classroom

As the preceding sections have shown, the evolution of translation competence – especially in relation to L2 translation and technological integration – requires a rethinking of pedagogical approaches in translator training. While theoretical models such as PACTE and EMT provide valuable frameworks for conceptualizing the components of competence, their practical application hinges on how these competences are cultivated in real classroom settings. At the same time, the persistent challenges associated with L2 translation, including risks of ambiguity and stylistic interference, call for targeted instructional strategies that respond to learners' developmental needs. Crucially, classroom activities should not only foster task-specific skills, but also support the development of transversal competences – such as critical thinking, adaptability, and digital literacy – which can be transferred across domains and adapted to future professional demands. To translate theory into practice, educators must design learning environments that are both scaffolded and responsive, offering students opportunities to experiment, reflect, and improve. The following section offers a set of in-class activities and pedagogical recommendations aimed at fostering L2 translation competence, with particular attention to clarity, register, and technological awareness in translating non-literary texts.

These in-class activities are based on my experience from class as well as other sources that include Pym (2009, 2019), Pym and Hao (2025), Hatim and Munday (2004), Klabal (2024), Ayvazyan et al. (2024), Lee (2023), Kubánek and Molnár (2012), González-Davies (2004).

### *6.1 Unaided translation*

*Activity 1: Translate from scratch without any automation*

I agree with Pym and Hao (2025: 83), who argue that a productive starting point in translator training is unaided human translation, "so that students will explore how their current skills can be augmented rather than replaced." Beginning with unaided translation allows learners to engage critically with their own linguistic resources and decision-making processes before introducing technological support. One of the key risks, as Pym and Hao (2025) suggest, is that students may short-circuit this developmental process by relying on technology too early, thereby limiting their potential for growth. It is therefore important to emphasize – repeatedly if necessary – that a competent professional translator must be capable of translating offline, drawing on core linguistic and cultural competences that no tool can fully substitute (Pym 2003).

### *6.2 Comparison of different translation outputs*

A valuable next step in translator training is the comparison of different workflows or translation scenarios, as there are multiple ways to arrive at an acceptable translation. Students can be encouraged to compare their unaided translations with outputs produced using varying degrees of automation.

*Activity 2: Compare your translation with different MT systems (NMT and GenAI)*

Students are asked to translate a short non-literary text unaided into their L2. They subsequently compare their own L2 translation with a machine-generated version. This comparison encourages students to reflect critically on their writing, identifying areas where their translation may be more accurate or stylistically appropriate than that of the machine.

Ultimately, this activity invites students to evaluate the strengths and limitations of automated translation tools. As Pym and Hao (2025: 84) note, students learn that "automatically generated translations are fallible but not useless – and the balance will shift with time." Allowing learners to explore these dynamics independently and then share their experiences in class fosters critical engagement and collaborative learning.

*Activity 3: Compare and critically evaluate NMT with GenAI*

Another activity invites students to critically assess the outputs of NMT systems of their choice (e.g. DeepL or Google Translate) in comparison with GenAI tools (e.g. Google Gemini, ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot). By selecting a carefully curated L1 text – preferably one with limited context, complex syntax, and other translation challenges – students are encouraged to examine both the strengths and potential pitfalls of automation. Translating such a text into L2 requires a high level of language proficiency so that students can effectively spot and evaluate inaccuracies or stylistic issues in the outputs.

### *6.3 Two levels of post-editing*

With a growing awareness of the strengths and limitations of translation technologies, students should also be introduced to the principles and practice of post-editing. Post-editing is the process of reviewing and refining MT output to enhance its accuracy,

readability, and overall quality. Unlike traditional translation, which involves creating a target text from scratch, post-editing focuses on improving an existing translation (Kruk & Kałużna 2025). It typically involves working with three texts: the source text, the MT output, and the final revised target text (O'Brien 2002). Two levels of post-editing are generally recognized: light post-editing, which involves minimal corrections for comprehensibility, and full post-editing, which entails thorough revision to meet professional standards. Depending on the context and goals, post-editing may be carried out manually by a human editor or supported by automated tools (cf. ISO 18857 2017). I agree with Vieira (2020) who proposes a move from an MT-centred task to a human-centred task as a key underlying pattern of post-editing's evolutionary process.

For instance, DeepL provides a convenient roll-up window with alternative vocabulary suggestions; selecting a different option may result in further automatic adjustments to the surrounding text. Similarly, when using GenAI, students should be introduced to the art of prompt design – that is, how to refine and iterate prompts to improve output quality. Teaching students to engage in multi-turn interactions with AI tools demonstrates how iterative prompting typically yields more accurate and nuanced translations than a single, direct prompt (Briakou et al. 2024).

To help students understand the difference between light and full post-editing and practice both on the same MT output, the following in-class activities can be considered. Provide students with a short, domain-specific source text (approx. 150–200 words) in L1 and its raw MT into L2 (using NMT or GenAI). Ask them to complete two versions of post-editing.

*Activity 4: Make only essential changes to ensure the text is understandable and grammatically correct, without concern for stylistic or idiomatic refinement (i.e. light post-editing).*

*Activity 5: Thoroughly revise the MT output to make it functionally equivalent to a high-quality human translation, meeting professional standards of clarity, style, and consistency (i.e. full post-editing).*

After completing both versions, students compare and reflect: 1) What types of errors did they correct in each version? 2) How did their editing decisions differ between light and full post-editing? 3) How much time did each version take?

As an optional follow-up, students can exchange their full post-editing outputs with peers and provide feedback on effectiveness, consistency, and overall translation quality.

A productive exercise in post-editing instruction involves training students to identify and categorize common MT errors, which serves as a foundation for effective revision strategies. In this activity, students are provided with a machine-generated translation of a moderately complex source text – ideally one containing domain-specific terminology, ambiguous constructions, or idiomatic expressions – translated into their second language (L2). Their first objective is to conduct an error analysis by annotating the MT output and classifying the types of errors they encounter (see Activity 6).

*Activity 6: Annotate the text by marking and categorizing different types of errors: lexical errors (wrong word choice, mistranslation), syntactic errors (incorrect sentence structure), semantic errors (meaning distortion, false friends), terminological inconsistencies, stylistic or register mismatches.*

Following the error identification phase, students revise the MT output using a full post-editing approach, aiming to produce a translation that meets professional standards of accuracy, clarity, and fluency. To consolidate learning, students may work in small groups to compare their analyses and editing strategies. Discussions can focus on the prevalence and severity of different error types, the relative ease or difficulty of correcting them, and the effectiveness of various editing techniques. Where applicable, the task may also be extended to include a reflection on the role of prompt engineering when working with GenAI systems. For instance, students may consider how alternative or iterative prompts could have improved the initial output and reduced the post-editing workload.

These activities not only enhance students' practical editing skills but also foster meta-linguistic awareness and critical engagement with translation technologies, thereby supporting their development as reflective and resourceful translators.

### 6.4 Pre-production process

Once students have acquired a basic understanding of MT and GenAI, along with an awareness of their limitations, it is an opportune moment to shift focus to the pre-production process. Aimed at reducing the post-editing workload, pre-editing the source text can significantly enhance the quality of raw MT output and facilitate machine processing. This approach is particularly beneficial when a single source text is to be translated into multiple target languages. Pre-editing strategies may include using relatively short, simple sentences instead of complex structures; preferring proper names or nouns over pronouns; ensuring terminological consistency by avoiding synonyms; and rephrasing constructions that might be difficult to interpret. Such modifications can improve MT accuracy and thus reduce the effort required during post-editing (ISO 18587 2017).

A useful classroom activity involves comparing a target text derived from a pre-edited source with one translated from an unedited version. Alternatively, the instructor may divide the class into groups, assigning each a different activity: one group translates a text from scratch; another pre-edits the source text; and a third post-edits the MT output. Provided that all groups are given the same amount of time, students can then reflect on and compare the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy.

*Activity 7: Focus on comparative workflow simulation: manual translation, pre-editing for MT, and post-editing MT output.*

In this activity students are divided into three groups, each assigned a distinct role within a controlled translation scenario:

– Group A receives the original, unedited source text and translates it manually into the target language (L2), without the use of MT.
– Group B is responsible for pre-editing the source text according to a set of guidelines (e.g. simplifying syntax, resolving ambiguous references, maintaining terminological consistency), after which the revised text is processed using an MT system. Students then evaluate the MT output without post-editing.
– Group C receives the raw MT output of the original (unedited) source text and is tasked with performing full post-editing to improve its accuracy, clarity, and fluency.

Each group is given the same amount of time to complete their activity. Once all groups have finished, a comparative discussion follows in which students reflect on the differences in workflow, translation quality, time efficiency, and cognitive effort. This activity also allows for reflection on how MT – and NMT in particular – can assist translators, particularly in enhancing fluency and naturalness in the target language – an advantage increasingly recognised in recent scholarship (Kruk & Kałuźna 2025).

### 6.5 Using GenAI to solve translation problems

*Activity 8: Ask GenAI to explain a collocation.*

GenAI can also serve as a valuable consultation tool when students encounter lexical interference or uncertainties in contextually ambiguous situations. For example, in one of my classes, students were translating an information leaflet on project management from Czech into English. In their translation they suggested using the term *project solver*, a direct translation of the Czech *řešitel projektu*. I encouraged them to consult GenAI using a simple prompt: *What or who is a project solver?*

ChatGPT 4.0 offered the following clarification (see Table 1 below):

**Table 1** Clarification of a term offered by ChatGPT 4.0

| The term "project solver" isn't commonly used in native English – it sounds like a literal translation from another language (possibly Czech, where *řešitel projektu* is a standard term). In English, the equivalent would depend on context, but here are some natural options: | |
| --- | --- |
| In academic or research contexts: | *Principal investigator* (PI) – used especially in research grants; the person primarily responsible for the project. |
| | *Project lead* or *Project leader* – someone overseeing the implementation and direction of a project. |
| | *Project manager* – typically used in business or technical settings, but sometimes in academia too, if there's more focus on logistics. |
| | *Grant holder* – if the emphasis is on the person who officially holds the grant funding. |
| Example sentence: Instead of saying "He is the project solver," a more idiomatic version would be: | "He is the *principal investigator* of the project." |
| | "She is *leading the project* on sustainable energy." |
| | "He is the *project lead* for the new grant." |

Through this interaction, students were able to identify the interference caused by a literal translation and ultimately select an appropriate, context-sensitive English equivalent. The experience also illustrated how GenAI tools can support terminology clarification and foster learners' critical engagement with language and meaning.

*Activity 9: Ask GenAI to explain various concepts.*

GenAI can further assist translators in understanding domain-specific concepts and principles from fields such as applied physics, chemistry, engineering, or medicine. An effective – and often enjoyable – in-class activity is to ask students to research and explain various technical concepts they are expected to translate. Examples might include *nega-*

*tive tongue weight*, *sonography*, or *black holes*. In doing so, students gradually build subject-matter expertise, which is essential when working with specialized texts.

### 6.6 Using GenAI to translate from various languages or dialects

It can be useful for translation trainees to search for information in languages they do not speak, particularly when critically evaluating multiple sources. In the Czech Republic, for instance, it is common practice to be asked to translate a Slovak text into English. While Slovak is typologically very similar to Czech – and most Czechs understand it – such texts may still pose challenges for some trainees. In these cases, the source text can first be rendered into Czech using GenAI tools, facilitating comprehension before proceeding with the English translation. A similar approach can be taken when working with texts written in regional dialects, such as Northern Irish English, where a standardization step might be helpful before translation.

*Activity 10: Translate the following text into Czech while maintaining the same register.*
*Activity 11: Translate the following text into natural English.*
*Activity 12: Translate this worksheet from Czech into clear, simple English for children aged 8–12.*

### 6.7 Using automation when working with domain-specific registers

Klabal (2024) discusses the use of plain language in the translation of legal texts into a L2, emphasizing the importance of consulting parallel texts and adhering to the discursive conventions of the target language. This approach allows non-native translators to develop "a repertoire of formulations pertaining to a specific topic and text type," resulting in translations that are not necessarily of lower quality than those produced by native speakers. When translators have access to high-quality parallel texts within a specific legal genre, their translation performance may be enhanced by uploading such texts to a GenAI tool and prompting it to model the English output accordingly.

### 6.8 Prompt design engineering

Teaching students prompt design engineering is an essential and creative part of translator training. Prompt templates are structured instructions that guide the translation process from Czech into English. These templates allow students to focus on specific translation aspects such as tone, register, and stylistic features, ensuring the final output meets the required standards. By providing clear and focused guidelines, prompt templates help maintain consistency, accuracy, and appropriateness, whether the text is formal, casual, or specialized.

The following is a collection of prompt templates for translating from Czech into English. These templates are organized according to specific translation objectives, enabling their flexible adaptation to various tasks (e.g., formal, poetic, child-friendly, etc.). However, they should be regarded as tentative suggestions rather than rigid guidelines that must be strictly adhered to.

- Translate the following Czech text into natural English.
- Translate this text from Czech to English using clear and neutral language.
- Provide an idiomatic English translation of the following Czech passage.
- Translate the following academic text from Czech into formal English suitable for a scholarly publication.
- Maintain the structure and terminology of the original Czech academic text, but ensure fluency and readability in English.
- Translate this university announcement into polished and professional English.
- Render this literary passage into English, keeping its tone, metaphors, and stylistic features intact.
- Translate the following excerpt for English-speaking high school students while retaining its literary value.
- Translate this worksheet from Czech into clear, simple English for children aged 8–12.
- Make this translation child-friendly and engaging while keeping instructions easy to follow.
- Translate this text for an English-speaking school group visiting a science centre.
- Translate the following Czech promotional text into smooth, appealing English suitable for marketing materials.
- Make this text sound natural and persuasive in English while staying faithful to the original Czech.
- Translate this product description from Czech to English with an emphasis on clarity and appeal.
- Make this Czech instruction sheet sound natural and easy to follow in English.
- Translate this consent form into formal but accessible English.
- Preserve cultural references where appropriate, but adapt if they would be unclear to English readers.
- Avoid over-literal translation; use idiomatic English wherever possible.
- Use UK English spelling and conventions (or US English if preferred).
- Keep the tone formal/informal/neutral/friendly/tenor-dominated/field-dominated.

GenAI can also assist in summarizing texts or identifying key sentences, aiding students in grasping the core meaning of a passage. Moreover, it can boost cohesive ties within a translation by suggesting appropriate transitions or lexical connections, ensuring that the final text flows more naturally and cohesively. These applications encourage students to critically engage with their translations while refining their linguistic skills.

### *6.9 Student reception*

Student reception of these activities has generally been positive, though not without ambivalence. Tasks involving unaided translation are often perceived as challenging or even discouraging at first, but they also foster a strong sense of achievement once students compare their solutions to machine-generated outputs. Comparative tasks (e.g. MT vs. GenAI, light vs. full post-editing) have often been perceived by students as engaging, as they seem to make tangible differences in approach and outcome more visible, and

they can stimulate lively classroom discussion. Post-editing activities, in particular, are well received as they help students appreciate their own agency in shaping the final text. Conversely, pre-editing is sometimes perceived as less intuitive, since students initially struggle to see why simplifying or restructuring a source text might be beneficial; however, peer reflection tends to mitigate this resistance over time.

Overall, the activities encourage a gradual shift in perception – from viewing technology as an obstacle, to recognising it as a resource that complements and extends human translation competence. These observations suggest that classroom interventions not only build technical skills but also reshape students' attitudes toward translation technologies. By framing technology as a complement rather than a replacement, the activities contribute to the development of a balanced and sustainable model of L2 translation competence.


## 7. Conclusion

The rapid evolution of translation technologies has significantly impacted the way translation competence is conceived, taught, and practised. Far from undermining the role of human translators, innovations such as NMT and GenAI create new opportunities for enhancing professional performance and redefining translation workflows. For translation teaching and training, this shift calls for an expanded competence model that integrates linguistic, technical, and critical literacies.

Drawing on first-hand teaching experience with undergraduate students who typically enter training with limited exposure to both unaided L2 translation and various technological tools (encompassing both NMT and AI), this paper has outlined practical strategies for developing L2 translation competence. These strategies combine traditional linguistic skills with technological literacy and aim to foster critical awareness through carefully designed, comparative classroom activities. Effective instruction must begin from where students are – often with little or no experience in L1 or L2 translation – and guide them toward reflective, competent practice.

There is no doubt that AI-assisted translation or MT are faster and more efficient. But there is also no doubt that it requires human post-editing to prevent semantic distortion, loss of contextual nuance, and culturally inappropriate renderings. Students must be trained to identify these limitations and correct them effectively. Moreover, the accelerating pace of technological innovation means that resisting change is not a viable strategy. The only sustainable response is to engage with technological developments critically and find ways to use them to our benefit (Pym & Hao 2025; Ličko 2014).

At the same time, while there is no shortage of resources compiling prompt templates and strategies for GenAI-assisted translation, there remains a notable lack of empirical evidence demonstrating which approaches actually enhance translation quality or learning outcomes. Future research should focus not only on prompt engineering as a creative skill, but also on its validation through classroom-based experimentation and assessment.

Three key take-aways for translator training emerge:

1. *Acknowledge students' starting point:* Novice trainees are unfamiliar with both unaided L2 translation as well as NMT and AI-assisted translation. As a result, instruction must be grounded in hands-on, comparative activities that foster core translation skills before moving to tool-based augmentation.
2. *Integrate post-editing and prompt design:* Post-editing should not be treated as a secondary skill. Rather, it is an essential component of professional translation literacy (Vieira 2020). Activities that combine error analysis, light versus full post-editing, and prompt engineering with GenAI can build both confidence and competence.
3. *Develop transversal competences:* Critical thinking, digital literacy, and adaptability are indispensable for future translators. These transversal skills must be embedded across training activities, enabling students to remain agile as tools evolve.

In this respect, the paper's classroom interventions align with Human-Centred AI approaches that highlight the centrality of human agency, creativity, and judgement in translation education, even in technology-intensive environments.

Ultimately, the role of technology in translation is not to replace human expertise, but to amplify it. By fostering a mindset that is both technologically confident and ethically grounded, translation trainers can prepare students to become not only competent users of current tools, but adaptable professionals ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

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**SUMMARY**

Questo articolo esplora l'evoluzione della competenza traduttiva in lingua seconda (L2) nel contesto degli sviluppi tecnologici, con particolare attenzione all'impatto dell'intelligenza artificiale generativa (GenAI) e dei modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni. Viene affrontata la crescente necessità di traduzione in L2 in risposta alla globalizzazione, al ruolo dell'inglese come lingua franca e alle richieste del mercato. L'articolo analizza criticamente le concezioni tradizionali sulla direzionalità, in particolare il principio del "native speaker", e mette in luce come la formazione dei traduttori debba adattarsi per integrare competenze linguistiche e tecnologiche. Un punto centrale riguarda l'inserimento delle tecnologie traduttive, come la traduzione automatica neurale e la GenAI, nei programmi di formazione, sottolineando l'importanza di sviluppare literacy digitale critica, consapevolezza etica e capacità di adattamento accanto alle abilità linguistiche tradizionali. Vengono inoltre presentate strategie didattiche e attività pratiche per favorire la competenza traduttiva in L2, incoraggiando gli studenti a utilizzare criticamente gli strumenti tecnologici senza perdere di vista l'intento comunicativo del testo. In conclusione, l'articolo sostiene un approccio dinamico e integrato alla competenza traduttiva, in grado di preparare i futuri professionisti a gestire e valorizzare le innovazioni tecnologiche nel campo della traduzione.

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