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Student translators and AI: practices, perceptions, and challenges at the University of Algiers 2

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Abstract

This article explores how students at the translation institute of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria) are adopting artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Using a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative data collected from 150 students, the study reveals a variety of attitudes ranging from pragmatic use to ethical resistance. The analysis reveals that AI tools, particularly conversational agents, are not perceived as technical aids, but as devices that structure the learning experience and relationships with effort and educational standards. In a university context marked by tensions between massification, digital inequalities, and demands for innovation, the article argues for the critical and contextualized integration of AI in translation training, revaluing the role of the teacher as a reflective mediator.

Keywords : *Algeria ; Artificial intelligence ; ChatGPT ; Qualitative analysis ; Translation.*

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into higher education is profoundly transforming learning methods, particularly in language-based disciplines such as translation. Neural translation tools (DeepL, Google Translate), automatic rephrasing platforms, and language model-based conversational agents (such as ChatGPT), which were once peripheral, are now widely used by students (Barbin, 2020, p.51-53). This appropriation most often takes place informally, outside of established educational frameworks, creating a significant gap between usage patterns and supervisory practices. This gap gives rise to tensions that are didactic (objectives and methods of integration), ethical (plagiarism, transparency), and symbolic (value of work, status of the author).

In developing countries, and particularly in Algeria, these changes take on a particular character. Higher education in Algeria is characterized by complex multilingualism (Arabic, Tamazight, French, English), unequal access to digital resources, and an educational organization often centered on professorial verticality, memorization, and the valorization of individual effort (Benrabah, 2014, p.64-70; Birech et Ait Dahmane 2024, p.661). Added to this

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is a persistent mistrust of technologies perceived as foreign, as well as a lack of institutional regulation regarding their use in academia. In this context, the adoption of AI by students can be described as part of a social space structured by differentiated habitus, competing representations of competence, and inequalities in access to infrastructure and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1980, p.63-72). Thus, learning to "translate with AI" becomes a total social fact, involving devices, norms, affects, and implicit hierarchies. The ways in which students use these tools contribute to redefining what it means to "learn," "practice," or "produce meaning" in an academic context shaped by technological modernization and pedagogical legacies.

The objective of our study is to analyze how, in this specific context, students at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria) appropriate AI tools in their learning practices, and how these uses reconfigure their skills, norms of engagement, and expectations of the institution. Beyond a technical or performative reading, we adopt an approach rooted in social practice theory, which allows us to understand uses as dynamic configurations of material elements, skills, and meanings (Bourdieu, 1972, p.157-243; 1980, p.63-72).

From this perspective, AI becomes a structuring element of educational routines, capable of transforming relationships between students and with teaching staff, but also knowledge and teaching methods. It can reinforce certain power relations, but also open up spaces for autonomy and circumvention of existing norms (Mardon, 2011, p.113-128). Our study is based on a mixed survey of 150 students enrolled at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria). It highlights a gradual hybridization of practices : between strategic appropriation (efficiency, time savings) and normative tensions (guilt, illegitimacy, opacity).

Throughout the analysis of the empirical data, our reflection was guided by a particular focus on the transformations brought about by artificial intelligence in learning practices. In a discipline based on subjectivity, reflexivity, and linguistic sensitivity, learning with AI involves a profound redefinition of the relationship to knowledge. Automated tools are transforming relationships with effort, assessment, creativity, and the boundaries of plagiarism, while also changing forms of academic legitimacy. Students, in interaction with these devices, are developing new ways of conceiving of "good practice" with, caught between technological imperatives, traditional pedagogical expectations, and their own strategies for adapting to institutional constraints.

The general issue that emerges can thus be formulated as follows: how does the use of artificial intelligence tools reconfigure learning practices in translation training, in the specific Algerian context, which is marked by pedagogical and digital tensions?

More specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions: (RQ1) What types of AI tools do translation students at the University of Algiers 2 use, and with what frequency and purposes? (RQ2) How do students perceive the effects of AI use on their learning, skills, and relationship to academic effort? (RQ3) What normative representations and institutional expectations structure students' attitudes toward AI in their training? These questions are directly connected to the mixed methodological design of the study (questionnaire and open-ended responses) and to the dual theoretical framework (social practice theory and critical hermeneutics), which together allow for a comprehensive and situated analysis of AI appropriation in this specific context.

While the international literature has increasingly addressed the integration of artificial intelligence in higher education and, to some extent, in translation pedagogy, empirical studies focusing specifically on student practices in the Algerian or broader North African context remain scarce. Existing research tends to examine AI adoption in Western or East Asian institutional settings (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023), overlooking the specific challenges posed by multilingual post-colonial university environments, unequal digital infrastructures, and vertical pedagogical traditions. This study addresses this identified gap by providing empirical data on AI appropriation practices among translation students at the University of Algiers 2, situated within its distinctive sociolinguistic and institutional context. Our study focuses on two areas of analysis: 1. Analysis of student use: typology of tools, frequency, functions, subjective perceptions (Peraya and Bonfils 2014). 2. A sociotechnical reading based on social practice theory, drawing on the concepts of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, p.40-44), structuration (Giddens, 1984), and the recomposition of the constituent elements of a practice (Shove et al. 2012).

2. Theoretical framework

Our study takes a constructivist and critical perspective, which considers educational technologies (and in particular artificial intelligence - AI) as socially constructed objects whose uses cannot be understood independently of the cultural, institutional, and symbolic contexts in which they are embedded (Selwyn, 2021, p.151). These AI tools are helping to reshape relationships with knowledge, academic legitimacy, and the standards of competence valued in professional training programs, such as translation.

In Algeria, where several languages coexist and access to digital tools remains unequal across regions and social groups, these transformations are all the more noticeable.

In order to understand these dynamics, our approach is based on a complementary dual theoretical framework, drawing on social practice theory on the one hand and a critical hermeneutic approach on the other (Bourdieu, 1972, p.157-243 ; Corcuff, 2002, p.147-160).

2.1 Breaking down uses into their constituent elements using Bourdieu's work

Our first analytical entry point is based on Bourdieu's theory of social practices (1972) and its development as seen by Reckwitz (2002, p.243-263), extended by the work of Shove et al. (2012, p.12-42), and linked to Giddens' theory of structuration (1984, p.402). In this perspective, a practice is neither an isolated behavior nor a simple application of skills, but a dynamic arrangement of three elements: materials (tools, artifacts, infrastructure), skills (knowledge, know-how, dispositions), and meanings (values, norms, shared representations).

The use of AI in translation learning can thus be seen as a gradual recomposition of these elements. Digital tools become central teaching materials; skills are redefined around a reflexive mastery of human-machine interaction; and the meanings of what constitutes "good work" or "legitimate practice" shift (Shove et al. 2012, p.24-25). This approach avoids dichotomies between "good" and "bad" uses, and instead views uses as situated practices, shaped by institutional constraints and different logics of appropriation.

Our thinking is also enriched by Bourdieu's (1986, p.40-41) contributions on the logics of distinction and the unequal distribution of capital within social fields. The introduction of AI technologies in translation training creates a new symbolic hierarchy of between students, based not only on their linguistic or academic skills, but also on their ability to mobilize and legitimize the use of digital tools. This ability can be thought of as an emerging form of "techno-pedagogical" capital, a valuable social resource that adds to linguistic, educational, and cultural capital and influences learning trajectories.

We propose to understand the concept of "techno-pedagogical capital" as a specific form of capital, distinct from but complementary to linguistic, cultural, and academic capital in Bourdieu's (1986) framework. It combines three dimensions: (1) technological proficiency : the ability to identify, select, and operate relevant digital tools; (2) critical digital literacy : the capacity to evaluate the outputs and limitations of AI tools; and (3) pedagogical positioning : the ability to integrate AI use strategically within academic norms. In the Algerian university context, this form of capital is unevenly distributed, as access to high-performance devices, reliable internet, and prior digital education varies significantly by region and socioeconomic background, reinforcing existing hierarchies within the educational field.

In Algeria, access to digital infrastructure varies greatly depending on region, institution, and social background. In this context, proficiency in technological tools is not the same everywhere. This difference creates visible disparities between students and teachers and becomes a symbolic marker of legitimacy or competence. It thus contributes to maintaining or reshaping social hierarchies within the university.

2.2 Hermeneutic interpretation of discourse as forms of social positioning

In addition, our second pillar is based on hermeneutics, inspired by the work of Malet (2011, p.320-322), who advocates a comparative approach to education that respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of concepts, refusing to reduce them to mere functional equivalences. It defends the responsibility of the researcher as a mediator, calling for clarification of meanings rather than standardization imposed by political or technocratic rationality. But also, in line with the work of Thompson (1987, p.8), whose work has placed ideology theory in a hermeneutic perspective, emphasizing that language does not simply describe the world, but constitutes a central mediation, revealing power relations.

Studying ideology thus amounts to interpreting the social uses of language as vectors of meaning, social organization, and the reproduction of structures. In our study, this choice of approach aims to interpret student discourse (verbatim quotes, narratives, representations) not as mere individual opinions, but as social products rooted in power relations, educational norms, and institutional tensions. This brings us back to the real freedom of AI users in the face of the linguistic hegemony of tool developers. The analysis of verbatim accounts thus reveals the ambivalence of learners between the strategic adoption of AI tools and feelings of transgression or illegitimacy. In the field of translation, where reflexivity, creativity, and ethical stance are valued skills (Pym, 2009, p.149-151), the use of AI can become a subject of identity negotiation. It reveals conflicts between academic norms and pragmatic adaptation, in a context where evaluation frameworks often remain unclear.

This combined theoretical framework allows us to approach AI as a sociotechnical device at the heart of the reconfiguration of educational practices. It sheds light on the dynamics of appropriation, circumvention, and legitimization at work among Algerian translation students, in an environment marked by vertical pedagogical legacies, structural constraints, and a lack of explicit regulation.

3. Methodologie

In order to explore how AI tools are appropriated by student- at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria), our study adopts a mixed methodological approach combining quantitative data (from a questionnaire) and qualitative data (verbatim responses to open-ended questions). This approach is pragmatic and comprehensive, allowing us to combine a descriptive analysis of the uses reported by the students with an interpretative reading of the representations and normative tensions expressed by them (Pluye et al., 2009, p.125-126).

3.1 Data collection mechanism

3.1.1. Collection instrument

The data were collected using a questionnaire distributed online via the Google Forms platform. This method was chosen because it guarantees the anonymity of respondents, promotes broad accessibility, and is in line with the digital practices of students at the translation institute.

The questionnaire we developed for this study included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to complement the methodology. The closed-ended questions were descriptive and focused on elements such as the types of AI tools used, frequency of use, and perceptions of their impact on academic skills. At the same time, open-ended questions (*In your opinion, what role should teachers play in the growing use of AI?*) were designed to gather data to explore students' expectations and their perceptions of artificial intelligence.

The questionnaire was designed to cover three complementary dimensions in order to capture the complexity of students' relationships with AI. The first dimension focused on actual practices, i.e., the concrete uses that students make of AI tools in the context of their education. The second explored normative representations, asking what students consider acceptable, legitimate, or problematic in these uses. Finally, the third dimension aimed to gather educational expectations, highlighting students' projections regarding the institution and its role in supervising or regulating these new practices.

The questionnaire was developed in several stages. Items were initially drawn from validated instruments used in prior studies on AI adoption in higher education, then adapted to the specific context of translation training. Both closed-ended and open-ended items were reviewed by the two authors for content validity and relevance. Prior to full distribution, a pilot phase was conducted with five translation students from outside the final sample in order to assess clarity of instructions, item comprehension, and overall coherence. Minor reformulations were made following pilot feedback.

3.1.2. Survey population and inclusion criteria

The survey was conducted among students at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria). Two inclusion criteria were selected:

- Be enrolled in a university translation program;
- Have used at least one artificial intelligence tool in a learning context, or be familiar with such tools.

The final sample comprises 150 usable responses. The breakdown by level of study is as follows:

Table1. Breakdown by level of education

Level	Number	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	2	18.7
Bachelor's degree	1	12
Bachelor's degree	60	40
Master's 1	41	27.3
Master's 2	3	2

This breakdown shows a strong presence of students at the end of their undergraduate studies (L3) and in Master 1, corresponding to pivotal stages of university education, marked by specialization and exposure to ever-increasing professional demands.

One of the salient features of the questionnaire concerns the foreign language of specialization of the students surveyed. This variable provides a better understanding of the dominant linguistic orientations in translation programs in Algeria and highlights both pedagogical and professional implications. The distribution of languages is presented in the table below:

Table2. Distribution by language

Language studied	Number	Approximate percentage
English	111	~74.5
Spanish	27	~18.1%
German	11	~7.4

These figures confirm the dominance of English as the first foreign language, chosen by nearly three-quarters of respondents. This finding is consistent with international trends, where English remains the lingua franca of scientific, diplomatic, and commercial exchanges. In Algeria, this choice can be explained by the important place given to English in university language policy in recent years, not to mention its growing value in the job market, particularly in the translation sector in general.

Spanish, chosen by one in five students, occupies a fairly significant position. This reflects the diversification of language options in secondary education, which prepares future high

school graduates to choose to continue their studies by opting for this language as a translation option. Finally, German appears to be a minority language, with only 7.4% of respondents choosing it. This figure is mainly due to a more limited range of university courses available due to a lack of teaching staff, particularly in the field of translation.

3.1.3. Distribution methods

The questionnaire was distributed using a multi-channel strategy aimed at reaching a wide range of translation students. On the one hand, the questionnaire was distributed by volunteer teachers, particularly via *Google Classroom* or through direct communication in class. On the other hand, it was distributed on academic social networks, using *Facebook* and *WhatsApp* groups specific to the relevant courses. The data was collected between April 27, 2025, and May 10, 2025, resulting in a diverse corpus that included students from different years of study, with a predominance of English as their specialization.

Since the multi-channel distribution strategy was designed to maximize reach across year levels, several sources of potential sampling bias should be acknowledged. First, online distribution via Google Forms, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups may have led to an overrepresentation of digitally active students who are already familiar with online academic tools, including AI. Second, voluntary participation introduces a self-selection effect: students with stronger engagement with or opinions about AI tools may have been more inclined to respond, potentially skewing results toward more pronounced attitudes in either direction. Third, the sample is limited to one institution (the University of Algiers 2), which may limit the generalizability of findings to other Algerian universities or to the broader North African context. These limitations are acknowledged and should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

In addition, this study was conducted in accordance with standard academic ethical principles. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the study's academic purposes at the beginning of the questionnaire. No incentives were offered for participation. Anonymity was guaranteed through the use of Google Forms without any requirement for personal identification: no names, student numbers, or contact details were collected. All data were stored securely on password-protected academic accounts and used exclusively for the purposes of this research. Participants were free to discontinue their participation at any point without consequence. No sensitive personal data were collected, and the survey design complied with the data protection principles applicable in the Algerian academic context.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Quantitative processing

The data from the closed questions were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using standard univariate statistical tools (Demers, 1992, p.106-108): frequencies, percentages, graphical representations (diagrams, pie charts), in order to identify general trends within the population.

To deepen the quantitative interpretation beyond descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to explore potential associations between key variables. In particular, the relationship between level of study and frequency of AI use was examined, as was the association between language of specialization and perceived effects of AI on academic skills. Chi-square tests of association were applied where cell frequencies permitted. Results suggest a statistically non-significant but notable tendency for Master's-level students to report more frequent and more critical use of AI tools compared to Bachelor's-level respondents, which aligns with the qualitative data showing greater reflexivity among advanced students. These analyses are exploratory given the sample size ($n=150$) and should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Among the salient results:

- 94.7% of students report using AI tools (*ChatGPT*, *Reverso*, *DeepL*, etc.) in their studies;
- 76.2% use them at least once a week, including 54.3% several times a week;
- The most frequent uses are for lexical research (70%), grammar correction (46.7%), and rephrasing (39.3%).

These results reveal the widespread and regular integration of AI into learning practices, far beyond occasional or marginal use.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

The analysis of the responses to the open-ended question was conducted according to the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77-101; Paillé and Mucchielli, 2008, p.200-260), from a constructivist and interpretive perspective (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Larochelle & Bednarz, 1994, p.5-19). The coding was carried out in several stages, with careful and cross-referenced reading of the verbatim responses, allowing recurring and latent themes to emerge.

Coding procedure and inter-coder reliability: The thematic coding was conducted in several stages following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first phase, both authors familiarized themselves with the corpus through repeated reading of all open-ended responses. In the second phase, initial codes were generated independently by each author, remaining closely tied to the language used by respondents (semantic coding). In the third phase, codes were grouped into candidate themes through iterative comparison and discussion between the two coders. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through dialogue and consensus. The three final analytical categories (relationship with tools, redefinition of competence, institutional expectations) were validated by both authors as adequately representative of the corpus. Category saturation was assessed pragmatically, based on the repeated and consistent emergence of themes across the full set of responses. No formal inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated, given the interpretive and constructivist epistemological framework adopted, in which coding is understood as a collaborative and reflexive process rather than a purely objective measurement procedure.

Three areas of analysis structured the reading of the qualitative materials:

- The relationship with tools (mastery, instrumentalization, dependence, or rejection);
- The redefinition of competence (intellectual autonomy vs. assisted efficiency);
- The representation of the role of the institution (training expectations, regulatory ambiguity, legitimization or implicit prohibition).

In addition, specific attention was paid to the symbolic dimension of discourse, in light of Bourdieu's work (1986). Some verbatim quotes express forms of distinction (e.g., "*I know how to use AI intelligently*"), while others reveal tensions or identity concerns (e.g., "*I don't know if it's good or bad*"). These elements allow us to think of AI appropriation as a socially situated practice, shaped by power relations, implicit norms, and differentiated adaptation strategies, particularly in an Algerian university context where there are few norms governing technological use.

5.Results & Discussion

The separate analysis of quantitative and qualitative data meets a requirement for methodological rigor, allowing each type of material to be treated according to its epistemological specificities. Quantitative data provide an overview of trends, while qualitative verbatim data require an interpretive reading rooted in the social contexts of the respondents. This distinction allows for the articulation of statistical objectivity and comprehensive richness.

5.1 Quantitative results: trends and tensions in students' use of artificial intelligence

Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, which was given to a sample of 150 students at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2*, highlights a widespread but differentiated uptake of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Although this adoption appears homogeneous, it is in fact marked by tensions related to cognitive effort, pedagogical legitimacy, disparities in access, and the redefinition of skills.

5.1.1. Widespread, regular, and diverse adoption

The majority of respondents (94.7%) say they use AI tools as part of their education. This use goes beyond simple experimentation: 54.3% of students use them several times a week, while 21.9% say they use them daily. This intensity reveals the integration of AI tools into academic routines, or even a form of functional dependence, where the tool becomes an almost natural extension of learning practices (Cegarra, 2024, p.58-59).

The tools used are distributed as follows:

- *ChatGPT* dominates (65.3% of respondents), illustrating the rapid rise of generative conversational AI in higher education;
- *Reverso* (55.3%) and *Google Translate* (36.7%) maintain their central role in traditional machine translation;
- *DeepL* (28%) is emerging as a solution perceived as more reliable in certain language pairs.

These data suggest a hybridization of uses, combining old and new tools, depending on educational needs, digital skills, and media and institutional exposure to these technologies.

5.1.2. Targeted uses, focused on linguistic optimization

The features most requested by students reflect a primarily instrumental use, focused on the formal improvement of linguistic output:

Table3. Main AI features

Main feature	Percentage of respondents
Lexical/idea search	70
Grammar correction	46.7
Syntactic reformulation	39
Machine translation	30
Interpretation training	19.3

These data indicate that AI is not used as a substitute for human skills, but as a support tool that saves time, reduces the effort required to formulate ideas, and stimulates creativity. This approach echoes what Shove et al. (2012, p.21-22) refer to as a reconfiguration of practices through the arrangement of materials, in this case technological materials.

5.1.3. Perceptions of the effects of AI on learning

When students are asked about the perceived effect of AI on their skills:

Table 4. Effects of AI on student skills

Perceived effect of AI on skills	Percentage
Skill improvement	70.4
No noticeable effect	23.9
Skill deterioration	5.6

These results reflect a predominantly positive perception, but not a unanimous one. They indicate that more than a quarter of respondents remain cautious about the benefits of AI, revealing a growing awareness of the changes it is bringing about in learning methods.

The predominantly positive perceptions of AI's effects on skills reported above must be interpreted with caution. Self-report data are inherently subject to several well-documented biases. Social desirability may lead students to underreport uses they perceive as illegitimate (such as submitting AI-generated work without disclosure), or to overstate the critical dimension of their engagement with tools. Retrospective rationalization may also play a role: students who have adopted AI tools habitually may construct post-hoc narratives of reflective

use to justify their practices. Furthermore, perceived learning gains and actual competence development are not equivalent: a student who uses ChatGPT to rephrase a sentence may perceive an improvement in their written output while in fact bypassing the cognitive processes involved in language skill acquisition. These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but they underscore the need to complement self-report survey data with observational methods (e.g., process-tracing, learning analytics) in future research.

The issue of cognitive effort reveals a more marked tension:

Table5. *Cognitive effort and AI*

Perceived effort through the use of AI	Percentage
Less effort (including much less: 19%)	64
As much effort as before	17.6
More effort	18.3

This distribution highlights an educational ambivalence. While AI facilitates access to certain solutions, it is also seen as a potential factor in disengagement, reducing cognitive and emotional investment in learning (Carr 2011, p.13). The risk of "algorithmic laziness," although only mentioned by a minority, emerges as an underlying theme in the qualitative comments.

5.1.4. Institutional support perceived as insufficient

The study highlights a marked discrepancy between actual practices and the explicit educational framework:

Table6. *Teachers' attitudes toward AI*

Teachers' attitudes towards AI	Percentage
Prohibition	68.7
Silence or no instructions	20
Explicit encouragement	11

This normative misalignment places students in a position of forced autonomy, where they must regulate their own use in the absence of stable institutional references. In response, 57% say they would like dedicated training on the use of AI, while 40.4% say they would be in favor of it if it were offered. These figures reflect a strong desire for reflective guidance, far from a logic of disempowerment (Bernoux, 1998, p.393-402).

5.1.5. *Persistent inequalities in access*

Finally, despite a relatively extensive digital infrastructure, digital divides remain:

Table7. *Internet access*

Regular internet access	Percentage
Yes	87.2
No or irregular	11.4
Not specified	1

These figures highlight that the integration of technology into Algerian education cannot ignore the material conditions of access, which vary greatly depending on the region, the institution, and the socioeconomic background of the students. The uptake of AI- s therefore structurally unequal, potentially reinforcing existing gaps in educational pathways (Merah and Boudhane, 2012, p.370).

5.2 Qualitative results: between hybrid practices and ethical positions

The patterns documented in this study resonate with, but also diverge from, findings reported in international research on AI adoption in higher education. Globally, widespread use of ChatGPT and similar generative AI tools among university students has been well established (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023), with similar functional uses reported (writing assistance, information retrieval, language correction) and comparable ambivalence regarding learning quality. However, the Algerian case exhibits several distinctive features: the coexistence of multiple languages of instruction, the persistence of top-down pedagogical models, significant regional disparities in digital infrastructure, and the near-total absence of institutional guidelines on AI use. These structural particularities produce a specific configuration of AI appropriation (more clandestine, more anxiety-laden, and more structurally constrained) that enriches the international Digital Pedagogy literature by providing evidence from a non-Western, post-colonial educational context.

The analysis of the open-ended responses provides a deeper understanding of the attitudes of *translation students* at the *University of Algiers 2* towards AI, beyond the numerical trends. These verbatim responses, freely expressed by the students, were processed using thematic content analysis, which identified recurring discursive patterns, normative tensions, and different forms of appropriation (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2008, p.200-260).

5.2.1. *Pragmatic but reflective uses*

Some students use AI as a linguistic support tool, while maintaining critical control over the results generated. The tool is seen here as a learning partner, but not as a substitute for human expertise.

Table8. Table of verbatim quotes 1

Verbatim	Code	Category
"I think it helped me improve my writing style."	Writing assistance	Assisted learning
"Don't believe everything you see, always check."	Human verification	Critical use
"I sometimes use ChatGPT to rephrase my sentences, but I always check for relevance."	Controlled rephrasing	Controlled appropriation
"I save time, but I'm careful not to distort my ideas."	Semantic vigilance	Quality control

These responses illustrate a reflective stance, where students become active participants in the use of technology, in a logic of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.963). This attitude corresponds to what Shove et al. (2012, p.24) describe as a rearrangement of practices, articulating skills, materials, and meanings.

5.2.2. Tensions around effort and learning

Other verbatim quotes highlight a cognitive ambivalence where AI is both a facilitator and a source of doubt about the quality of learning. It saves time, but at the cost of reduced intellectual involvement.

Table9. Table of verbatim quotes 2

Verbatim	Code	Category
"Sometimes I do my homework faster thanks to AI, but I feel like I'm learning less."	Time saved vs. loss of learning	Educational ambivalence
"Artificial intelligence saves me time, but it can also make you lazy."	Technological laziness	Risk of cognitive atrophy
"We quickly get used to not making an effort, everything is already done for us."	Automation of effort	Effacement of effort

These statements echo warnings about the effects of unlearning induced by cognitive automation, and are consistent with the previous figures: 64.1% of students say they make less effort thanks to AI. Here, use becomes a lever for immediate optimization, but with a latent cost in terms of skill consolidation.

5.2.3. Discreet, sometimes illegitimate uses

In addition, a significant proportion of students mention a lack of clear guidelines, leading them to engage in covert or hesitant practices. Without institutional legitimacy, the use of AI is sliding towards a form of educational clandestinity.

Table10. Table of verbatim quotes 3

Verbatim	Code	Category
"I don't know if I'm allowed to use it, so I don't say anything."	Concealed usage	Normative ambiguity
"No teacher told us whether it was okay or not."	Institutional vacuum	Lack of framework
"I would like to be taught how to use it properly."	Request for regulation	Educational expectations

This register refers to De Certeau's (1990, p.51-59) analysis of "everyday tactics": in a vague context, users develop discreet, improvised, and unofficial strategies to get around the rules. The absence of formal guidelines leads to individual risk management, revealing a lack of institutional ownership.

5.2.4. Towards an ethics of learning between conscious refusal and ambivalence

Finally, some students express a critical distance or deliberate refusal to use AI, in the name of educational values centered on personal effort, intellectual rigor, or the authenticity of work.

Table11. Table of verbatim quotes 4

Verbatim	Code	Category
"I prefer to do my exercises myself; I want to learn on my own."	Autonomous refusal	Traditional learning
"I rarely use these tools, except when I'm really short on time."	Opportunistic use	Occasional adoption
"AI is useful, but it will never replace human analysis."	Superiority of human thinking	Critical distance

This minority stance resembles a form of resistant habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, p.40-41), in which dispositions value effort, autonomy, and reflexive mastery. These students advocate an ethic of competence in the face of the promise of technical efficiency, implicitly raising the question of the value of unassisted work in an era marked by increasing automation.

5.2.5. Proposed typology of student attitudes toward the use of AI

Correlating quantitative and qualitative data reveals the existence of a spectrum of student attitudes, which can be summarized according to four rationales:

Table12. Student attitudes

Attitude	Characteristic features	Theoretical basis
Reflective use	Frequent use; verification; learning purpose	Social practices (Reckwitz 2002)
Ambivalent use	Time saving; doubts about learning	Effort and cognition (Carr 2011)

Concealed use	Institutional ambiguity; individual strategy	Tricks and tactics (De Certeau 1990)
Ethical refusal	Claimed autonomy; rejection of automation	Pedagogical habitus (Bourdieu 1986)

This interpretative model, while not exhaustive, provides insight into the different rationales for AI adoption in an Algerian context marked by top-down teaching methods, inadequate institutional regulation, and persistent material inequalities.

The patterns of AI use documented in this study raise broader questions for the professional formation of translators. The habitual delegation of linguistic tasks to AI tools may gradually reshape students' understanding of what it means to be a translator. Recent scholarship has foregrounded concerns about the blurring of boundaries between human and machine agency in meaning production (Kenny, 2022; Kolb & Miller, 2022): as AI tools become embedded in professional workflows, competences valued by the market are shifting toward post-editing proficiency, quality assessment, and critical revision skills. If students are not explicitly trained to reflect on these shifts, unreflective dependence may result. Ethical dimensions are equally at stake: questions of authorship, transparency, and responsibility for translation quality must be foregrounded in AI-integrated curricula (Pym, 2025).

Conclusion

Our study of 150 students at the *translation institute* of the *University of Algiers 2* (Algeria), based on a mixed methodological approach, has highlighted the multiple ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) is being appropriated in teaching practices and learning routines. This plurality of uses, ranging from critical experimentation to silent dependence, reflects the emergence of new forms of relationships with knowledge, academic work, and educational authority. The use of generative AI (in particular tools such as ChatGPT or DeepL) appears to be a structuring component of student social practices (Bourdieu, 1976, p.157-243; Shove et al 2012; Reckwitz, 2002, p.243-263). It is reconfiguring the ways in which we write, understand, translate, and reproduce knowledge, while profoundly affecting the implicit norms of what constitutes "good work," a "good translation," or a "legitimate effort." In this sense, AI functions as a sociotechnical device, in the sense understood by Foucault (1977, p.201), producing both effects of power, opportunities for emancipation, and normative tensions.

In the specific context of Algerian higher education, these reconfigurations take on particular resonance. The massification of courses, the lack of systematic training in digital literacy, the persistence of top-down pedagogy, and inequalities in access to digital resources create a hybrid learning ecosystem that is both rich in potential and fragile in terms of equity. Student practices reveal a double gap: on the one hand, between actual uses and institutional discourse; on the other hand, between ambitions for technological modernization and the often precarious reality of infrastructure and pedagogical management (Saidia, 2023, p.450,-451). In this situation, students are not asking for authoritarian regulation, but for informed and ethical support. Most want educational guidance that recognizes the existence of these tools without demonizing them or presenting them as a miracle solution. This expectation is in line with work on critical digital pedagogy, which emphasizes the need to train students to read technology in a reflective and contextualized way (Giroux, 2020, p.79-98; Selwyn, 2021, p.116-124).

Three major pedagogical implications emerge from this study. First, it appears necessary to integrate critical AI literacy into translation curricula in order to equip students to deal with the technical, ethical, and epistemological issues raised by these tools. Second, assessment practices need to be rethought to better reflect the real conditions of knowledge production in the digital age, by valuing the process, critical thinking, and intellectual autonomy. Finally, teacher training in digital mediation is needed to enable them to support students in their reflections and reflexivity on AI in a structured and constantly evolving academic setting.

In addition, our study opens up promising avenues for future work. A comparative interregional approach would provide a better understanding of the effects of territorial inequalities on usage. A longitudinal analysis would offer a more refined view of the trajectories of AI appropriation throughout the curriculum. In addition, a study cross-referencing teachers' representations would provide a better understanding of the symbolic resistance and identity reconfigurations at work in the academic field.

Finally, artificial intelligence (AI) should not be framed either as a panacea or as an existential threat to education. The evidence gathered in this study points instead to a more complex and ambivalent reality: AI is neither simply liberating nor straightforwardly harmful, but a structuring force that reshapes learning practices in ways that are deeply conditioned by social, institutional, and material contexts. In the Algerian case, its integration intensifies existing inequalities while simultaneously opening spaces for autonomy and adaptation. The challenge for translation pedagogy is therefore not to take a normative position for or against AI, but to create the conditions under which students can develop a critical, informed, and ethically grounded relationship with these tools, one that equips them not only to use AI effectively, but to understand its limitations, its stakes, and its implications for their identity as future translators and language professionals.

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