



Analyzing Pragmatic Equivalence in AI-Assisted Arabic Literary Translation: Students as Cultural Mediators

تحليل التكافؤ التداولي في الترجمة الأدبية العربية المدعومة بالذكاء الاصطناعي: الطلاب كوسطاء

ثقافيين

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ABSTRACT

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) disrupts translation, Arabic-to-Indonesian literary translation remains challenging as AI systems fail to achieve pragmatic equivalence amidst complex religious, cultural, and rhetorical nuances. This qualitative case study at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang investigates these challenges and students' roles as cultural mediators. Involving 10 Arabic literature students, data were gathered via phenomenological interviews and comparative analysis of Arabic literary texts, raw outputs from four AI platforms (ChatGPT, DeepL, Google Translate, Gemini), and students' post-edited versions, using Mona Baker's framework. Findings reveal AI produces literal translations devoid of cultural and spiritual context. To counteract this cultural distortion, students employ a tripartite mediation strategy: identifying implicit source-text implicatures, evaluating target readers high-context backgrounds, and executing creative post-editing. The study concludes the translator's role has evolved into a curator of cultural meaning, making post-editing an indispensable 'second creative process' requiring human hermeneutic sensitivity.

Keywords: Pragmatic Equivalence; Artificial Intelligence; Arabic Literature; Cultural Mediator; Post-Editing.

مستخلص البحث

بينما يحدث الذكاء الاصطناعي ثورة في الترجمة، تظل ترجمة الأدب العربي إلى الإندونيسية تحدياً لقصور أنظمة الذكاء الاصطناعي عن تحقيق التكافؤ التداولي وسط الفروق الدينية والثقافية والبلاغية المعقدة. تبحث دراسة الحالة النوعية هذه في جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية بمالانج في هذه التحديات ودور الطلاب كوسطاء ثقافيين. بمشاركة ١٠ طلاب من قسم الأدب العربي، جمعت البيانات عبر مقابلات ظاهرية وتحليل مقارن لنصوص أدبية عربية، ومخرجات أربع منصات للذكاء الاصطناعي (ChatGPT و DeepL و Google Translate و Gemini)، وتعديلات الطلاب اللاحقة، باستخدام إطار مني بيكر. تكشف النتائج أن الذكاء الاصطناعي ينتج ترجمات حرفية خالية من السياق الثقافي والروحي. ولمواجهة هذا "التشويه الثقافي"، يستخدم الطلاب استراتيجية وساطة ثلاثية: تحديد التضمينات الضمنية في النص المصدر، وتقييم الخلفية الثقافية للقراء، وإجراء تحرير لاحق إبداعي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى تطور دور المترجم ليصبح قِيَمًا على المعنى الثقافي، مما يجعل التحرير اللاحق "عملية إبداعية ثانية" لا غنى عنها تتطلب حساسية تأويلية بشرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكافؤ التداولي؛ الذكاء الاصطناعي؛ الأدب العربي؛ الوسيط الثقافي؛ التحرير اللاحق.

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INTRODUCTION

Mastering foreign languages in the 21st century has become one of the most crucial global competencies in shaping human resource capacity. Along with the current of globalization and the exponential development of information technology, cross-lingual translation practices no longer rely entirely on traditional human cognitive abilities. The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly innovations in Neural Machine Translation (NMT) architectures and Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and DeepL, has brought massive disruption to language education and the global translation landscape (Qura, 2023; Zulkornain & Hamzah, 2022). Various recent studies consistently confirm that current generative AI systems are capable of achieving extraordinarily high grammatical and syntactic accuracy in seconds, surpassing the technical limitations previously experienced by Statistical Machine Translation (Al-Harbi, 2024; Omar & Salih, 2024; Zubaidi, 2024).

Although NMT demonstrates remarkable computational superiority in technical, journalistic, or administrative text genres, its capabilities are severely tested when dealing with literary texts. This becomes increasingly problematic in the context of Arabic literature—a text genre heavily laden with rhetorical content (*balaghah*), philosophical orders, and religious values. Classical and modern Arabic literature does not merely function as a medium for transferring factual information, but rather as a cultural artifact carrying a web of implicatures strongly tied to Islamic traditions, local wisdom, and the long history of Middle Eastern civilization (Al Zahrawi et al., 2024; Mohammed, 2023). In the landscape of translating Arabic literature into Indonesian, this challenge multiplies because both languages represent high-context cultures that heavily rely on implicit meanings, politeness norms, and communal assumptions that are not always articulated in writing (Mustafa, 2022).

The fatal flaw of AI in processing Arabic literary texts lies in its operational paradigm. Generative AI algorithms operate solely based on statistical probability calculations and lack what is called cultural sense. Consequently, the resulting translation outputs often fall into the trap of cultural distortion (الترجمة المشوهة ثقافيا). Phrases laden with perlocutionary values, Sufistic metaphors, or religious idioms are brutally reduced to rigid lexical equivalents (Laila, 2023; Majdi, 2022). For instance, expressions rooted in Islamic theology are often translated literally, thereby losing their emotional essence and pragmatic dimensions in the eyes of the target readers (Abdul Ghaffar, 2024; Alzobidy, 2026). This phenomenon indicates that AI, no matter how advanced, still holds

the status of a syntactic entity and has not yet evolved into a complete pragmatic entity.

In modern translation studies, Mona Baker (2018), through her monumental work 'In Other Words', positions Pragmatic Equivalence as the highest, most complex, and most difficult hierarchy to achieve in the translation ecology. Pragmatic equivalence requires translators not only to translate 'what is written' but to reconstruct the 'implied meaning' of the source text author in order to provide an equivalent psychological and cultural effect for the target readers. In today's higher education environment, the adoption of AI by students has radically altered their cognitive processes. Language students no longer act as primary drafters composing translations from scratch, but are required to transform into cultural mediators. They must bear the heavy task of reinjecting the pragmatic soul into the raw drafts produced by AI (O'Brien, 2022; Safar & Al-Kanhal, 2022).

Despite the massive debate regarding the ethics of AI use among academics, empirical studies highlighting how human translators' mental processes mediate AI's pragmatic deficiencies in literary texts remain very marginal (Al-Rashid, 2023; Chen & Xu, 2022). The majority of literature focuses on product-oriented evaluation, namely measuring the machine's error rate (error analysis). This study takes a different direction by focusing on a process-oriented approach and human agency. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical demonstration that students' post-editing in Arabic-Indonesian literary translation is not merely a process of error correction, but fundamentally involves implicature identification, target-reader evaluation, and cultural reconstruction at the macro-textual level. Therefore, this research aims to comprehensively analyze pragmatically flawed AI outputs and examine the cognitive strategies and creative interventions students apply in the post-editing stage to reconstruct the cultural and religious content of Arabic literature so that it aligns with the cognition of Indonesian readers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative case study design focused on post-editing process analysis, supplemented by phenomenological interviews. This methodological choice bridges the need to systematically compare textual data (source texts, AI-generated outputs, and student revisions) while deeply exploring the subjective cognitive experiences and decision-making processes of students as they interact with artificial intelligence instruments. The research was conducted within the Department of

Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, an institution with a strong tradition in Islamic studies and applied Arabic linguistics.

Participant selection was conducted using the purposive sampling technique. The participants in this study were 5th-semester students who are currently taking or have completed the Fann at-Tarjamah (Art of Translation) course. The primary inclusion criterion for participants was that they had direct and active experience using various AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, DeepL, and Google Translate, to complete translation tasks or projects involving Arabic literary texts with religious-cultural content. In addition to students, this study also involved translation course lecturers to obtain triangulation of perspectives regarding pedagogical competencies and shifts in translation patterns in the digital era.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Semester	AI Tools Used	Years of Arabic Study
P1	Female	21	5th	ChatGPT, DeepL	4
P2	Male	22	5th	Google Translate	4
P3	Female	20	5th	ChatGPT	3
P4	Female	21	5th	DeepL	3
P5	Male	23	5th	ChatGPT, Google Translate	5
P6	Female	22	5th	DeepL, Gemini	4
P7	Male	21	5th	Google Translate	3
P8	Female	20	5th	ChatGPT, DeepL	3
P9	Male	22	5th	Gemini	4
P10	Female	21	5th	ChatGPT	4

The data collection process was carried out through three main qualitative instruments to ensure the richness and depth of information. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students narratives regarding specific obstacles they encountered in AI translation outputs, as well as the rationalization behind their post-editing decisions. Second, participant observation was conducted by directly observing students behavior when operating AI (prompting) and revising the text drafts. Third, document analysis served as empirical evidence, where researchers critically compared three text components: (1) the Arabic source text, (2) the raw AI machine translation output, and (3) the final text after student post-editing intervention.

The collected data were then analyzed using the Interactive Model which includes a series of stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. As a theoretical analytical tool, the researcher adopted Mona Baker's Equivalence Theory, with a specific focus on Pragmatic Equivalence. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applied qualitative research credibility standards through source and methodological triangulation techniques, as well as member checking, which involves returning transcripts and initial findings to participants to validate the accuracy of their meanings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Cultural Distortion Trap: AI's Statistical Probability Bias

Text analysis and field interviews reveal that the greatest systemic obstacle faced by students utilizing AI for Arabic literary translation resides not in the realm of grammatical structure (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), but in the loss of pragmatic equivalence. Technically, generative AI has achieved an extraordinary level of syntactic maturity, often producing flawless Indonesian sentences. However, the fundamental problem lies within the underlying architecture of Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and Large Language Models (LLMs). These models operate predominantly on the statistical probability of token prediction derived from massive, historically accumulated datasets (Castaldo et al., 2025). Because these models map words based on vector spaces and distributional semantics, they possess an inherent tendency to flatten the depth of literary meaning, prioritizing statistical safety over aesthetic or cultural accuracy.

This statistical prioritization becomes a severe liability when intersecting with the Arabic language, particularly its literary traditions. Arabic literature possesses an extraordinary richness in the use of rhetorical arts (*badi'* and *bayan*), such as metaphors

(majas), figurative language (kinayah), and metonymy. Because the global corpora used to train models like ChatGPT or Google Translate are heavily Anglocentric or inherently secularized in their structural mapping, the unique spiritual and philosophical worldview (*Weltanschauung*) of the Arab-Islamic context is often marginalized (Sánchez Ramos, 2025). As a result, when AI encounters Sufistic metaphors or religious idioms heavily laden with socio-historical weight, it converts them into direct declarative sentences that are dry, literal, and culturally hollow.

This algorithmic failure triggers a dangerous phenomenon known in computational linguistics as 'fluent hallucinations' or deceptive fluency (Ji et al., 2023). In the context of translation, deceptive fluency occurs when the machine produces a target sentence that reads perfectly naturally and grammatically in Indonesian, yet completely betrays the pragmatic intent, emotional tone, or cultural nuance of the original Arabic author. This poses a significant threat to novice translators or lay readers who might trust the output simply because it sounds coherent, unaware that the core eschatological or cultural message has suffered fatal distortion (Abdul Ghaffar, 2024).

Furthermore, the root of this cultural distortion trap can be traced to the inherent conflict between high-context and low-context communication paradigms (Hall, 1976). Arabic and Indonesian both represent high-context cultures, where a vast amount of meaning is implied, relying heavily on shared socio-religious norms, unspoken politeness markers, and communal assumptions. Conversely, AI processes language as a hyper-low-context entity; it operates under the assumption that 100% of the communicative intent is explicitly encoded in the text's surface syntax. AI cannot 'read between the lines' or draw upon extratextual Islamic historiography, leaving it fundamentally blind to the cultural implicatures that define Arabic literature.

Field findings robustly align with recent empirical studies by Alzobidy (2026) and Hezam Alqahtani & Al-Ahdal (2025), which highlight that leading generative AI platforms exhibit a literal translation bias of up to 76% when handling Arabic proverbs (*amsal*) and cultural idioms. The machine's failure is not due to a lack of vocabulary, but an absolute absence of hermeneutic empathy – the human ability to feel, interpret, and contextualize a text within its living cultural fabric. Consequently, relying solely on statistical probability without human cognitive intervention inevitably reduces Arabic literary masterpieces into soulless transactional texts.

Empirical Evidence: Deconstructing AI Output and Student Intervention

To illustrate the pragmatic distortion caused by AI and the interventions performed by students, this study presents primary data from the practice of translating Arabic literary texts into Indonesian. Below is a critical comparison between the Source Text, Raw AI Output (Google Translate/ChatGPT), and Student Post-Editing Results categorized into six major pragmatic themes:

1. Distortion of Cultural Implicature and Historical Idioms

Table 2. Translation Comparison for Theme: Distortion of Cultural Implicature and Historical Idioms

Case	Source Text	AI Translation	Student Editing	Post-Editing	Pragmatic Strategy
Case 1.1 (The Story of Hunayn)	بعد أن خسر ثروته في تلك التجارة، عاد إلى قريته بخفي حنين	Setelah kehilangan kekayaannya dalam dalam perdagangan perdagangan itu, dia kembali ke desanya dengan sepatu bot Hunayn.	Setelah jatuh bangkrut dalam perdagangan itu, ia pulang ke desanya dengan tangan hampa. [P1]		Domestication
Case 1.2 (The Story of Sinmar)	بعد كل ما قدمته للشركة، كان جزائي جزاء سنمار	Setelah semua yang saya berikan kepada perusahaan, hukuman saya adalah hukuman Sinmar.	Setelah semua pengorbananku untuk perusahaan, air susu dibalas dengan air tuba. [P2]		Domestication

Case 1.3 (Shan and Tabaqa)	وافق شن طبقة في هذا الزواج	Shan menyetujui kelas dalam pernikahan ini.	Keduanya benar-benar berjodoh dan saling melengkapi dalam pernikahan ini. [P3]	Explicitation
Case 1.4 (The Camel's Back)	كانت تلك الكلمة هي القشة التي قصمت ظهر البعير	Kata itu adalah jerami yang mematahkan punggung unta.	Perkataan itulah yang menjadi puncak batas kesabaranku. [P4]	Explicitation

Analysis Case 1.1: Applying Baker's pragmatic criteria, AI failed to recognize the historical idiom عاد بخفي حنين, prioritizing semantic literalism over perlocutionary effect. The student [P1] actively evaluated the target culture's cognitive framework for 'total failure' and applied a domestication strategy. By employing the Indonesian equivalent 'pulang dengan tangan hampa', the student objectively restored the intended socio-cultural resonance, ensuring the target reader receives a pragmatically equivalent emotional impact rather than a nonsensical reference to footwear.

Analysis Case 1.2: جزاء سمنار refers to an ancient Arab architect executed after building a magnificent palace, symbolizing extreme ingratitude. AI translated this bound narrative as a literal punishment. To achieve pragmatic equivalence, the student [P2] systematically mapped the source implicature to the target reader's cultural repertoire, substituting it with 'air susu dibalas dengan air tuba' (kindness repaid with cruelty). This demonstrates a measurable shift from literal evaluation to cultural reconstruction.

Analysis Case 1.3: The AI disastrously misread the proverb وافق شن طبقة (a story about a smart man finding an equally smart wife) as a literal agreement of social classes. The student [P3] utilized explicitation to extract the pragmatic core (a perfectly compatible match), discarding the historical names to prevent cognitive dissonance for

Indonesian readers.

Analysis Case 1.4: While 'the straw that broke the camel's back' exists in English, translating it literally into Indonesian creates an irrelevant agricultural image. The student [P4] applied pragmatic explicitation to decode the implicature, directly stating the psychological threshold of endurance, thereby fulfilling the pragmatic function of the idiom.

2. Reducing Phatic Function and Religious Terminology

Table 3. Translation Comparison for Theme: Reducing Phatic Function and Religious Terminology

Case	Source Text (Arabic)	AI Translation	Student Post-Editing	Pragmatic Strategy
Case 2.1 (Religious Gratitude/Refusal)	كثير خيرك، ولكن العين بصيرة واليد قصيرة	Semoga kebaikanmu bertambah, tetapi mata itu melihat dan tangan itu pendek.	Terima kasih banyak atas niat baikmu, namun apa daya aku tidak mampu membantunya. [P5]	Explicitation
Case 2.2 (The Whiten Face Metaphor)	بيض الله وجهك يا أخي على هذه المساعدة	Semoga Allah memutihkan wajahmu, saudaraku, atas bantuan ini.	Terima kasih banyak atas kebaikan dan bantuanmu, saudaraku. [P6]	Domestication
Case 2.3 (Knowing One's Worth)	لا تتدخل فيما لا يعينك، فرحم الله امرأ عرف قدر نفسه	Jangan ikut campur urusan yang bukan urusanmu, semoga Allah merahmati orang yang	Jangan ikut campur urusan orang lain, sadarlah akan batasan dirimu sendiri. [P7]	Pragmatic Adaptation

		mengetahui		
		nilai dirinya.		
Case 2.4	البقية في حياتك يا	Sisanya	Turut berduka	Domestication
(Expressing	صديقي في وفاة	dalam	cita yang	
Condolences)	والدك	hidupmu,	sedalam-	
		temanku, atas	dalamnya atas	
		kematian	wafatnya	
		ayahmu.	ayahmu,	
			kawan. [P8]	

Analysis Case 2.1: AI treated كثر خيرك as a literal prayer and العين بصيرة واليد قصيرة as physical descriptions. The student [P5] recognized the phatic politeness function and applied an explication strategy, capturing the essence of 'having a strong desire but lacking resources'.

Analysis Case 2.2: AI's literal translation of بيض الله وجهك (whitening the face) creates a highly awkward, almost racist or cosmetic connotation in Indonesian. In Arab culture, it is a religious phatic expression of immense gratitude and honor. The student [P6] stripped the literal wording and replaced it with a culturally appropriate expression of profound thanks.

Analysis Case 2.3: AI processed رحم الله امرأ as a standard prayer for mercy. Pragmatically, it is a stern, indirect warning against overstepping boundaries. The student [P7] prioritized pragmatic equivalence over semantic loyalty, transforming the pseudo-religious prayer into a direct, firm social reprimand acceptable in the Indonesian context.

Analysis Case 2.4: البقية في حياتك is a culturally bound phatic expression for mourning, implying 'may the rest of the deceased's unlive life be added to yours.' AI translated this mechanically into 'sisanya dalam hidupmu', rendering it nonsensical. The student [P8] restored the pragmatic function of condolences using standard Indonesian mourning etiquette.

3. Failure to Detect Sarcasm (Irony)

Table 4. Translation Comparison for Theme: Failure to Detect Sarcasm (Irony)

Case	Source Text (Arabic)	AI Translation	Student Editing	Post-Pragmatic Strategy
Case 3.1 (Ruining the Car)	ما شاء الله! لقد أصلحت السيارة حقاً حتى أصبحت خردة	Atas kehendak Allah! Anda benar-benar telah memperbaiki mobil itu sehingga menjadi rongsokan.	Hebat betul! Kau malah memperbaiki mobilnya sampai hancur jadi rongsokan. [P9]	Domestication
Case 3.2 (Abu Zaid's Raid)	بعد كل هذا التعب، رجعنا لنقطة الصفر، كأنك يا أبو زيد ما غزيت	Setelah semua kelelahan ini, kita kembali ke titik nol, seolah-olah kamu, hai Abu Zaid, tidak menyerang.	Setelah bersusah payah, kita malah kembali ke awal, benar-benar kerja bakti yang sia-sia! [P10]	Domestication
Case 3.3 (Praising Destruction)	عاشت الأيدي! لقد أحرقت الطعام تماماً	Hiduplah tangan-tangan itu! Anda telah membakar makanan itu sepenuhnya.	Pintar sekali! Makanannya sampai gosong total begini. [P1]	Domestication
Case 3.4	أضعت المفاتيح مرة	Kamu	Menghilangkan	Domestication

(The Genius Mistake)	أخرى؟ حقا أنت !عبقري زمانك	kehilangan kunci lagi? Sungguh kamu adalah jenius di zamanmu!	kunci lagi? Hebat betul jalan pikiranmu! [P2]
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Analysis Case 3.1: AI treated ما شاء الله as literal religious praise, rendering the target sentence structurally contradictory. The student [P9] substituted the religious utterance with an equivalent sarcastic expression in Indonesian (Hebat betul!), ensuring the ironic implicature is perfectly conveyed.

Analysis Case 3.2: The AI failed to detect that the reference to Abu Zaid is a sarcastic proverb for futile effort. The literal translation confuses the reader with a random historical name. The student [P10] decoded the irony, domesticating it into 'kerja bakti yang sia-sia' (futile volunteer work), successfully replicating the cynical tone.

Analysis Case 3.3: The phrase عاشت الأيدي (bless your hands) is conventionally used to praise a cook. Here, it is weaponized as sarcasm. AI's translation ('hiduplah tangan-tangan itu') is a syntactic hallucination. The student [P1] neutralized the literal body-part reference and shifted to a universally understood Indonesian sarcastic praise ('Pintar sekali!').

Analysis Case 3.4: AI maintained the literal hyperbole 'jenius di zamanmu', which in Indonesian can sound like a poorly translated cartoon rather than sharp literary sarcasm. By modifying it to 'Hebat betul jalan pikiranmu!', the student [P2] utilized a natural Indonesian pragmatic structure for mocking foolish behavior.

4. Flattening of Sufistic Metaphors

Table 5. Translation Comparison for Theme: Flattening of Sufistic Metaphors

Case	Source Text (Arabic)	AI Translation	Student Post-Editing	Pragmatic Strategy
Case 4.1 (The Desert of Matter)	كانت روحه عطشى، تبحث عن قطرة ماء في	Jiwanya haus, mencari setetes air di gurun materi.	Batinnya dilanda dahaga spiritual,	Explicitation

	صحراء المادة		mencari setetes kedamaian di tengah gersangnya kehidupan duniawi. [P3]	
Case 4.2 (The Sea of Love)	بعد سنوات من الخلوة، ذاب في بحر العشق الإلهي	Setelah bertahun- tahun menyendiri, dia meleleh di laut cinta ilahi.	Setelah bertahun- tahun berkhalwat, jiwanya fana dan lebur dalam samudra mahabah Ilahi. [P4]	Explicitation
Case 4.3 (Taking Off the Sandals)	لكي تصل إلى الحقيقة، يجب أن تخلع نعلي الدنيا والآخرة	Untuk mencapai kebenaran, kamu harus melepas dua sandal dunia dan akhirat.	Untuk mencapai hakikat, engkau harus melepaskan segala keterikatan hati pada duniawi dan ukhrawi. [P5]	Explicitation
Case 4.4 (The Cup of Wine)	شرب كأس الخمر في حانة الأرواح حتى سكر	Dia minum secangkir anggur di kedai roh sampai dia	Ia mereguk cawan makrifat di majelis kerohanian	Cultural Mediation

mabuk.	hingga
	tenggelam
	dalam ekstase
	ilahiah. [P6]

Analysis Case 4.1: AI rendered صحرَاء المادَة as gurun materi, stripping away its spiritual connotation. Drawing upon classical Sufi hermeneutics, the student [P3] explicitly translated this to reflect the metaphysical tension between the spirit and the material world ('gersangnya kehidupan duniawi'), thus fulfilling the pragmatic requirement of the mystical genre.

Analysis Case 4.2: Translating the verb ذاب literally as 'meleleh' (melting like ice) ruins the majestic Sufi concept of ego dissolution. Substantiated by Islamic ontological literature (e.g., Al-Ghazali's framework), the term 'mahabah' denotes the ultimate spiritual annihilation (Fana). The student [P4] correctly anchored the translation in this specific theological epistemology rather than personal stylistic preference, ensuring true pragmatic equivalence.

Analysis Case 4.3: “Taking off the sandals” is an advanced Sufi intertextual reference to Moses, symbolizing absolute detachment. AI's literal output creates a comical image. The student [P5] systematically reconstructed the phrase to reveal its underlying philosophical mandate of “spiritual detachment”.

Analysis Case 4.4: Translating خمر (wine) and سكر (intoxication) literally into a predominantly Muslim target culture triggers a taboo. In the broader textual context of Sufi poetry, these terms function strictly as allegories for divine revelation. The student [P6] engaged in rigorous cultural mediation, mapping these terms to their accepted mystical equivalents ('makrifat' and 'ekstase ilahiah'), demonstrating that pragmatic equivalence in religious literature often demands bold semantic shifts.

5. Misinterpretation of High-Context Politeness

Table 6. Translation Comparison for Theme: Misinterpretation of High-Context Politeness

Case	Source Text (Arabic)	AI Translation	Student Post-Editing	Pragmatic Strategy
Case 5.1	تفضل يا أخي	Silakan	Silakan	Domestication

(The Heavy Guest)	البيت بيتك ولا تكن ضيفا ثقيلا	saudaraku, rumah ini adalah rumahmu dan jangan menjadi tamu yang berat.	masuk, Saudaraku. Anggap saja rumah sendiri dan jangan sungkan- sungkan. [P7]	
Case 5.2 (From My Eyes)	طلبك من عيوني يا أستاذ	Permintaanmu dari mataku, hai guru.	Dengan senang hati akan saya penuhi permintaan Anda, Pak. [P8]	Domestication
Case 5.3 (Leave It On Us)	عندما أراد دفع الحساب، قال له صاحب المطعم: خلما علينا هذه المرة	Ketika dia ingin membayar tagihan, pemilik restoran berkata kepadanya: Biarkan pada kami kali ini.	Saat ia hendak membayar tagihan, pemilik restoran berkata: Tidak usah bayar, kali ini saya yang traktir. [P9]	Domestication
Case 5.4 (Duty Over Gratitude)	قال له بعد مساعدته: لا شكر على واجب	Dia berkata kepadanya setelah membantunya: Tidak ada terima kasih atas	Seusai menolongnya, ia berkata: Sama-sama, sudah menjadi kewajiban	Domestication

Analysis Case 5.1: Telling someone not to be a heavy guest is a high-context invitation to act informally. AI translated it as an insulting command. The student [P7] identified this politeness marker and applied a domestication strategy (jangan sungkan-sungkan), reversing the literal hostility of the machine output.

Analysis Case 5.2: من عيوني (from my eyes) is a highly affectionate, polite Arab idiomatic response indicating a willingness to serve. AI's literal output is biologically absurd. The student [P8] applied pragmatic domestication to match Indonesian professional politeness standards, completely bypassing the anatomical reference.

Analysis Case 5.3: The AI's phrase Biarkan pada kami is a direct calque that sounds unnaturally rigid in a hospitable context. The student [P9] mediated the high-context hospitality script by using saya yang traktir (my treat), which accurately reflects the pragmatic warmth and casual generosity intended by the Arabic speaker.

Analysis Case 5.4: لا شكر على واجب is the standard polite deflection of gratitude. AI's literal translation sounds like a cold, robotic reprimand (Tidak ada terima kasih). The student [P10] recovered the phatic politeness by inserting the standard Indonesian response Sama-sama (You're welcome), coupled with a natural cultural explanation of duty.

6. Macro-Textual Narrative and Theological Discourse (Extended Case Study)

Table 7. Translation Comparison for Theme: Macro-Textual Narrative and Theological Discourse (Extended Case Study)

Case	Source Text (Arabic)	AI Translation	Student Post-Editing	Pragmatic Strategy
Case 6.1 (Tawfiq al-Hakim's Arini Allah)	كان في سالف العصر والأوان رجل طيب السريرة ، صافي الضمير رزقه الله طفلا ذكي الفؤاد ذلق اللسان	Pada zaman dahulu kala, ada seorang pria yang baik hati dan murni hati nuraninya, Allah memberkatinya dengan seorang	Pada zaman dahulu, hiduplah seorang pria yang tulus dan bersih hatinya. Allah mengaruniainya	Macro-level Explicitation & Pragmatic Adaptation

فكانت أمتع ..	anak yang cerdas	seorang putra
لحظاته ساعة	hatinya dan fasih	yang cerdas dan
يجلس إلى طفله	lidahnya..	fasih berbicara.
يتحدثان كأنهما	Momen-momen	Momen paling
صديقان... فيلاحظ	yang paling	membahagiakan
كأن فارق السن	menyenangkan	baginya adalah
وفاصل الزمن	baginya adalah	saat duduk
يرتفع من بينهما	saat dia duduk	bercengkerama
كستارة وهمية من	bersama anaknya	bersama sang
حرير فإذا هما	berbicara seolah-	putra, layaknya
متفقان متفاهمان	olah mereka	dua orang
لهما عين العلم ،	adalah teman...	sahabat. Ia
وعين الجهل	Dia	merasa seolah
بحقائق الوجود	memperhatikan	sekat usia dan
... وجواهر الأشياء	seolah-olah	jarak waktu di
نظر الرجل يوماً إلى	perbedaan usia	antara mereka
: طفله وقال	dan jarak waktu	tersingkap bagai
... ! شكراً لله —	terangkat di	tirai sutra yang
أنت لي نعمة من الله	antara mereka	semu. Mereka
! ...	seperti tirai sutra	begitu sehati
: فقال الطفل	imajiner, tiba-tiba	dan
إنك يا أبت —	mereka sepakat	sepemikiran,
تتحدث كثيراً عن	dan saling	memiliki
... ! أرني الله	memahami,	pandangan
ماذا تقول يا —	mereka memiliki	yang sama
	mata	tentang apa
	pengetahuan dan	yang mereka
	mata	ketahui maupun
	ketidaktahuan	tidak ketahui
	tentang fakta	mengenai
	keberadaan dan	hakikat wujud
	esensi benda-	dan esensi

...إبني ؟	benda... Pria itu	segala sesuatu.
لفظها الرجل فاغر	melihat anaknya	Suatu hari, pria
الفم ، ذاهل الفكر	suatu hari dan	itu menatap
فهذا طلب من ،	berkata: 'Terima	putranya dan
الطفل غريب لا	kasih kepada	berkata, 'Segala
يدري بم يجيب عنه	Allah! ... Kamu	puji bagi Allah!
وأطرق ملياً .. ثم ...	adalah nikmat	Engkau
التفت إلى ابنه	dari Allah	sungguh
مردداً كالمخاطب	untukku! ...'	anugerah
: نفسه	Anak itu berkata:	terindah dari-
تريد أن أريك —	'Sesungguhnya	Nya untukku!'
... الله ؟	kamu, ayahku,	Sang putra
	banyak berbicara	membalas,
	tentang Allah..	'Ayah, engkau
	Tunjukkan	sering sekali
	padaku Allah! ...'	berbicara
	'Apa yang kamu	tentang Allah...
	katakan,	Kalau begitu,
	anakku?!' ... Pria	perlihatkan
	itu	Allah
	mengucapkannya	kepadaku!' 'Apa
	dengan mulut	yang baru saja
	terbuka, pikiran	kau katakan,
	linglung, karena	Nak?!' Pria itu
	ini adalah	terkesiap,
	permintaan dari	mulutnya
	anak yang aneh	ternganga dan
	yang dia tidak	pikirannya
	tahu bagaimana	mendadak
	menjawabnya...	kosong.
	Dan dia	Permintaan
	menunduk lama..	putranya itu

Kemudian dia	benar-benar di luar
menoleh ke	dugaan, hingga
putranya	ia tak tahu
mengulang-ulang	harus menjawab
seperti berbicara	apa. Ia
pada dirinya	tertunduk diam
sendiri: 'Kamu	cukup lama...
ingin aku	lalu menatap
menunjukkan	putranya seraya
Allah padamu?	bergumam,
...'	seakan
	berbicara pada
	dirinya sendiri,
	'Kau ingin aku
	memperlihatkan
	Allah
	kepadamu?...'
	[P5]

Analysis Case 6.1: This macro-textual excerpt from Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Arini Allah* exposes AI's limitations in capturing literary cohesion and contextual idioms. First, the AI translated ذكي الفؤاد ذلق اللسان literally as *cerdas hatinya dan fasih lidahnya*, which the student [P5] refined into the more natural literary Indonesian *cerdas dan fasih berbicara*. Second, the complex metaphorical phrase لهما عين العلم وعين الجهل was translated by the AI as *mereka memiliki mata pengetahuan dan mata ketidaktahuan*, which is highly unnatural and confusing. The student engaged in a deep hermeneutic reconstruction (explicitation), rendering it as *memiliki pandangan yang sama tentang apa yang mereka ketahui maupun tidak ketahui*, thus restoring the philosophical depth intended by the author. Finally, the student managed the emotional shift in the dialogue by replacing literal exclamations with contextually grounded Indonesian expressions (e.g., transforming ذاهل الفكر ، فاغر الفم / *mulut terbuka, pikiran linglung* into *terkesiap, mulutnya ternganga dan pikirannya mendadak kosong*), proving that post-editing at the

discourse level requires human empathy and literary finesse.

Students as Cultural Mediators

Facing the structural failure of AI in identifying cultural implicatures as seen in the empirical evidence above, the students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim did not act passively. Instead of taking the draft for granted, they took over cognitive agency by positioning themselves as “cultural mediators”. The role of this cultural mediator proved to be not just a theoretical concept, but a cognitive praxis that takes place through three systematic and continuous stages during the post-editing process.

The first stage is Implicature Identification. Students conduct a careful comparative reading between the original Arabic text and the AI translation results to track implied meanings (implicatures) that escaped the machine algorithm's radar. They attempt to separate literal dictionary meanings from the hidden sociolinguistic intent. This requires high literary sensitivity, where students must recognize when an Arabic writer uses religious allusions or historical figures to express social critique or a character's inner turmoil (Hussaina, 2023; Jung Ae et al., 2025).

The second stage is Reader Background Evaluation. Considering that Indonesian society has high-context cultural characteristics with strong roots in Islamic tradition, students make cognitive calculations regarding the extent to which Indonesian target readers can independently grasp the message. This evaluation is important so that the translation does not become too descriptive or patronizing to the reader's intelligence, yet not too elitist that it fails to be understood (Shahin, 2023). They weigh the cultural distance between the Arab society (source text environment) and the Indonesian society (target text environment).

The third stage is Strategic Decision Making. At this peak stage, students consciously decide on the most moderate and equivalent form of translation intervention. This decision varies depending on the sentence context; they might choose a domestication strategy (adjusting Arabic proverbs to Indonesian proverbs that serve a similar function), perform explicitation (adding one or two adverbs to clarify an obscure metaphor), or even maintain foreignization (keeping the Arabic terms with pronunciation adjustments to preserve the exotic nuance of religious texts). These three stages confirm O'Brien's (2022) findings that human agents are absolutely necessary to reconstruct communicative intent in humanities texts.

Post-Editing as a Second Creative Process

The stages of cultural mediation practiced by students represent a paradigm shift in translation pedagogy. In the current golden age of AI, Machine Translation Post-Editing (MTPE) activities on literary texts can no longer be reduced merely to correcting mechanical errors, typography, or basic lexical anomalies (error correction) (Ruhmadi & Al Farisi, 2023). On the contrary, MTPE in literature has transformed into a 'second creative process' that requires a fundamentally different skill-set from conventional translation (Sánchez Ramos, 2025). In this paradigm, the student ceases to be a mere editor and steps into the role of a co-author or 'rewriter', aligning with André Lefevere's translation theory where rewriting is an act of ideological and poetic manipulation to ensure cultural acceptance (Lefevere, 1992).

Within this creative process, the AI output is positioned merely as a raw scaffolding or the skeletal framework of a narrative structure. The machine provides the baseline lexicon and syntax, but the 'soul', the emotional resonance, and the poetic rhythm of the Arabic literature must be meticulously reinjected through human intellectual intervention. This dynamic creates a paradox: while AI theoretically accelerates the drafting phase, resolving 'deceptive fluency' and identifying hidden cultural distortions actually imposes a massive cognitive load on the students (O'Brien, 2022). They must constantly exercise critical skepticism against a machine that sounds authoritative, expending significant mental energy to dismantle and restructure sentences so they flow naturally in literary Indonesian.

This intensive cognitive investment highlights the indispensable role of the Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) framework in literary translation. The core advantage that the student possesses over the algorithm is 'lived experience' (what phenomenologists term *Erlebnis*) and hermeneutic empathy. A computational model, no matter how vast its parameters, cannot 'feel' the spiritual yearning in a Sufi poem, nor can it comprehend the delicate social weight of an Arab politeness marker. The student, drawing from their own lived experience within an Islamic-Indonesian cultural matrix, actively curates the meaning, finding the exact emotional equivalent that resonates with the target reader's psyche.

Furthermore, this conceptualization of post-editing serves as a vital countermeasure against the threat of 'de-skilling' in the language profession. There is a growing academic concern that over-reliance on AI might erode students' linguistic

instincts and creative translation capacities. However, by elevating MTPE to a hermeneutic and creative act, this pedagogical approach actually 'up-skills' the students. They are trained to operate at a higher macro-textual and pragmatic level, shifting their focus from micro-level vocabulary searching to macro-level cultural orchestration and stylistic refinement (Castaldo et al., 2025).

Ultimately, it is at this crucial intersection that the indispensable cognitive agency of the human translator is reaffirmed. The student's intervention ensures that the aesthetic integrity, moral weight, and spiritual dimensions of classical and modern Arabic texts are transmitted without being secularized or mechanized by algorithms. Post-editing is thus recognized not as a subservient task to the machine, but as a creative battleground. It is the arena where students actively reclaim their interpretative authority from the hegemony of statistical probability, ensuring that translation remains a deeply humanistic endeavor.

CONCLUSION

This research synthesizes three key findings regarding AI-assisted Arabic literary translation. First, while AI demonstrates syntactic maturity, it systematically generates pragmatic distortion by reducing cultural implicatures, phatic markers, and Sufistic metaphors into literal equivalents. Second, to counteract this, students employ a tripartite mediation mechanism identifying implicit implicatures, evaluating target-reader high-context backgrounds, and executing strategic post-editing. Third, this dynamic conceptually implies that Machine Translation Post-Editing (MTPE) in literature is no longer mere error correction, but a higher-order interpretive activity requiring profound hermeneutic sensitivity.

However, this study acknowledges several limitations. The research was conducted at a single institution involving a specific cohort of fifth-semester students, utilizing a limited number of AI platforms, and examining a relatively small set of translation cases. Consequently, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to all translation demographics or AI systems as a whole. To build upon these findings, a clear agenda for future research is proposed. Subsequent studies should systematically compare the mediation strategies of novice versus advanced translation students. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to evaluate pragmatic equivalence across multiple LLMs using expert-rater assessments, or to integrate quantitative evaluation metrics alongside qualitative analysis to measure the precise impact of human intervention.

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