

The Risks of Deskilling: Integrity and Translator Education Under Generative AI

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Abstract:

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence into translator education has been accompanied by predominantly techno-optimistic narratives that portray AI as an inevitable catalyst for pedagogical innovation. While acknowledging its potential, this paper argues that the uncritical adoption of generative AI raises fundamental questions about educational integrity and the long-term development of translator competence.

Drawing on recent critical scholarship, the paper conceptualises deskilling as a structural phenomenon affecting both individual competence development and the professional identity of translators. Against this backdrop, it presents an AI-assisted pedagogical innovation implemented in an undergraduate reverse translation course at a Spanish university. The instructional design pursues two complementary objectives: fostering students' critical AI literacy and strengthening translator sub-competences through a dual pedagogical approach that alternates between AI-supported activities and tasks requiring printed dictionaries and other non-AI resources.

Preliminary findings from student focus groups indicate that learners value this balanced approach, recognising both the opportunities offered by generative AI and the importance of preserving the knowledge, skills and professional judgement that underpin professional integrity. The paper argues that educational integrity extends beyond responsible AI use or academic misconduct to encompass the conditions that enable future translators to develop expertise, autonomy and critical agency. It concludes by advocating AI-assisted pedagogical designs that place integrity, human agency and competence development at their core.