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MILITARY TRANSLATION IN THE ERA OF AI ASSISTANTS: OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS, AND INTEGRATION PATHWAYS

Summary. The article examines the specific nature of military translation in the context of the rapid proliferation of AI assistants equipped with text translation capabilities. Proceeding from the understanding of military translation as a distinct type of institutional discourse characterised by high terminological density, strict standardisation and elevated pragmatic risks, the study outlines how it differs from other professional discourses and highlights its role in ensuring effective military communication. The article demonstrates the link between military translation and the development of officers' professional competence under conditions of Euro-Atlantic integration and participation in multinational operations. The aim of the article is to analyse the potential and limitations of using neural machine translation and conversational AI assistants in the domain of military translation and in the teaching of military translation. The methodological framework of the study is based on an analysis of contemporary linguistic and translation studies, as well as a comparison of the characteristics of military discourse with the capabilities of AI-based translation. In the main body of the article, examples are provided of using an AI assistant for preliminary (draft) translation followed by post-editing, which makes it possible to illustrate both the advantages (speed and reduction of routine workload, support for terminological work, development of teaching materials and tasks for cadets) and the risks (terminological instability, inaccurate rendering of modality, possible cultural-pragmatic distortions, threats to confidentiality and cybersecurity). The article substantiates the appropriateness of a hybrid "AI + human" model, in which AI assistants are regarded as an auxiliary tool for preliminary translation and variant generation, whereas the ultimate responsibility for accuracy, standardisation and communication security rests with the military translator and language instructor. The conclusion is drawn that there is a need to develop methodological guidelines and standards for integrating AI tools into the system of military education and the training of military translators.

Key words: military translation, military discourse, artificial intelligence, AI assistants, machine translation, post-

editing, military education, terminology, communication security.

Introduction. The rapid spread of AI assistants with built-in translation functions in military education and practice creates a contradiction between the obvious advantages of such tools (speed, accessibility, support in working with large volumes of English-language materials) and the high requirements for accuracy, security and standardisation of military discourse. At present, there is a lack of systematised criteria and methodological guidelines that would define when and how AI-based translation tools can be safely and effectively integrated into military translation and the training of military translators without increasing operational and ethical risks.

Theoretical background. In contemporary research, military translation is viewed as a distinct variety of institutional discourse with its own cognitive-communicative system and strict requirements for accuracy. O. Buhaichuk defines military discourse as a "military cognitive-communicative system, which represents a system of concepts interaction in the military sphere with the aim of ensuring rational communication" [1, p. 28]. Against this background, military translation is oriented not towards producing a "refined" text, but towards preserving the functionality of the message: the correctness of the order, the unambiguity of the command and the accurate description of the tactical situation. According to Buhaichuk, the adequacy of translation depends on the precise rendering of "terms, military-technical terms, vocabulary and clichés of the military sphere" [1, p. 31].

Compared to other professional discourses (legal, medical, scientific), military discourse combines high terminological density with increased pragmatic risks: even a minimal semantic error may affect the safety of a unit or the success of an operation. N. Yemelianova emphasises that "military texts are characterized by the use of specific vocabulary, terminology, phraseology", which often do not have direct equivalents in general language [2, p. 231]. Therefore, military translation is oriented towards a standardised, maximally unambiguous version of the target text rather than stylistic variability.

Another important feature is the multimodal nature of military documents that “they might include not only verbal messages, but also different symbols, abbreviations, tables, and other graphic info, which often makes it harder to understand the text” [3, p. 320]. Military texts are often produced under time pressure and stress; therefore, the translator must combine linguistic competence with knowledge of tactical and organisational realities, weapons, force structure and the specifics of international missions [2, p. 231]. Ukrainian research in military education underlines that, in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration and multinational operations, the role of translators and officers with foreign-language proficiency is growing, and the quality of their training is directly linked to their ability to work with English-language professionally oriented texts [4, pp. 49–50]. Thus, military translation becomes an integral component of an officer’s professional competence.

In parallel, translation studies have seen the development of artificial intelligence systems capable of translating texts, ranging from rule-based systems to neural models and conversational AI assistants (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.). The review by M. Amini et al. traces the evolution from statistical to neural machine translation and stresses that AI technologies have increased the speed, accuracy and efficiency of translation, reduced its cost and expanded access to information in different languages [5, pp. 741–742]. At the same time, the authors highlight fundamental limitations: difficulties in conveying cultural nuances, humour and idiomaticity, problems with low-resource languages, as well as ethical risks related to data confidentiality and bias [5, pp. 745–747]. Human evaluation remains the “gold standard” of quality, and hybrid models in which AI is combined with human post-editing are considered the most promising [5, pp. 742–743].

Conversational AI assistants offer an integrated environment in which translation is only one of several functions. S. Biswas notes that ChatGPT is potentially capable of analysing large volumes of textual data, translating natural-language messages, generating training materials and exercise scenarios, yet emphasises the “experimental” character of these capabilities and the impossibility of treating the model as a full-fledged replacement for traditional military procedures and professional expertise [6, pp. 2–4]. In the broader context of translation studies, AI assistants provide obvious advantages (speed, scalability, preliminary translation, terminological support), but at the same time they generate risks ranging from the uncontrolled dissemination of low-quality machine translations to changes in the very structure of the translation profession [5, pp. 742–743; 749–750].

The combination of the specific nature of military translation and the rapid development of AI assistants makes the chosen topic particularly relevant. On the one hand, military translation deals with texts in which the cost of error is extremely high and the room for “creative interpretation” is minimal [2, pp. 229–231; 1, pp. 28–29]. On the other hand, the war, intensive international cooperation and the continuous flow of English-language information stimulate the desire to use tools that enable rapid translation and preliminary processing of materials. The limitations of AI-based translation (lack of cultural nuance, sensitivity to stylistic variation, risks to confidentiality and bias [5, pp. 745–747]) acquire critical weight in the military context and are further compounded by issues of cybersecurity and operational reliability [5, p. 749].

The aim of this article is to analyse the specific features of military translation as a type of institutional discourse, to

characterise the potential of AI assistants with translation capabilities in the sphere of military translation and teaching military translation, and to identify the main advantages and limitations of their use. On this basis, the article seeks to outline directions and preliminary recommendations for the balanced integration of AI-based tools into the professional activity and training of military translators and language instructors.

Result. Military translation combines strict requirements for accuracy, standardised formulations and heightened pragmatic risks, whereas AI assistants with translation capabilities offer speed, scalability and ease of use [7, pp. 487–489; 8, pp. 62–65]. Yet how exactly can AI assistants be used in military translation and in the teaching of military translation? The following translation examples make it possible to outline the advantages and drawbacks of such use.

1. Preliminary translation of training and teaching materials. The safest and most appropriate area of application for AI assistants is the preliminary translation of open training and teaching materials (textbooks, manuals, presentations, training orders, lesson instructions) that do not contain restricted or classified information [9, pp. 12–15; 10, pp. 333–336].

Example. A fragment from a tactics training manual: *Platoon leaders must ensure that all soldiers are familiar with the rules of engagement (ROE), the layout of the area of operations (AO), and the location of friendly and enemy forces before the mission starts.*

Typical AI-generated translation: *Командири взводів повинні переконатися, що всі солдати ознайомлені з правилами участі у бойових діях (ROE), плануванням району ведення операцій (AO) та розташуванням дружніх і ворожих сил до початку місії.*

Post-edited version by a human translator: *Командири взводів повинні переконатися, що всі військовослужбовці ознайомлені з правилами застосування сили (ROE), схемою району проведення операції (AO) та розташуванням своїх і ворожих сил до початку виконання завдання.*

The AI assistant satisfactorily reproduces the basic sentence structure and correctly interprets ROE as “rules of engagement in combat” and AO as “area of operations”. However:

- in Ukrainian military documentation *soldiers* is often replaced by the more neutral *військовослужбовці* (“service personnel”);
- in national practice *rules of engagement* is more commonly rendered as *правила застосування сили* (“rules on the use of force”), which better reflects the content of ROE [8, p. 62];
- *layout of the area of operations* is rendered by the AI as *планування району* (“planning of the area”), which is stylistically and semantically less accurate than *схема району проведення операції* (“diagram of the area of operations”);
- the added phrase *до початку виконання завдання* (“before the task is carried out”) helps align the text with typical formulations used in operation orders [8, pp. 64–65].

In this case, the AI assistant significantly reduces the time needed for a draft translation, while the translator focuses on harmonising terminology and style and ensuring compliance with the standards of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [7, pp. 493–495].

2. Work with terminology, abbreviations and clichés. AI assistants can provide effective support for terminological searches and the creation of training glossaries, especially for teachers of military English [9, pp. 20–22; 10, pp. 340–343].

Example. *Translating a term and working with its variants: forward operating base (FOB).*

Possible variants suggested by AI:

- *передова оперативна база*
- *передова база операцій*
- *передова база забезпечення*

In English–Ukrainian military glossaries, such units are usually rendered as *передова база операцій* (“forward operating base”) or similar equivalents [8, pp. 62–63].

Tasks for the military translator / instructor:

1. To choose an acceptable variant that corresponds to already established practice in the specific institution (for example, to the approved translation in doctrinal documents).

2. To fix the chosen variant in a local glossary or teaching materials.

3. To use AI to create training exercises with this term (gap-filling, matching, sentence translation, etc.), turning machine translation into a didactic resource for practising post-editing [9, pp. 22–24].

3. Translation of low-sensitivity official correspondence and messages. Another area of practical application for AI is the draft translation of unclassified official letters, e-mails, and messages related to training, logistics, visit coordination and similar issues [7, pp. 497–500].

Example. An official letter concerning a training event: *Dear Major Smith, our unit will host a two-day joint training event on unmanned aerial systems (UAS) on 5-6 March. We kindly ask you to confirm the participation of your instructor team and inform us about any accommodation or support requirements.*

AI-generated translation: *Шановний майоре Сміт, наш підрозділ проводитиме дводенний спільний навчальний захід щодо безпілотних авіаційних систем (UAS) 5-6 березня. Просимо Вас підтвердити участь вашої інструкторської групи та повідомити нас про будь-які вимоги щодо розміщення або забезпечення.*

Minimal post-editing:

- align the form of address with standard business correspondence (e.g. *Шановний пане майоре* – “Dear Major” with the appropriate form);
- check the format of dates, abbreviations and term usage;
- adapt courtesy formulas to that standard in the specific organisation [8, pp. 64–67].

Here, the risks are significantly lower than in the case of operation orders or documents regulating the use of force, yet human control over formal style, terminological accuracy and the avoidance of excessive informality remains necessary [7, pp. 497–500].

Typical problems in using AI for military translation. Based on practical examples, several typical groups of errors and risks associated with AI-based translation in military discourse can be identified; these largely coincide with what researchers observe in the machine translation of specialised and legal texts [11, pp. 786–789].

1. Modality and degree of obligation. The system may level *must, shall, may* into a general *повинен / може* (“must / may”), blurring the distinctions between obligation, recommendation and permission. For military documents this is crucial, as modal verbs are directly linked to the legal consequences of non-compliance with an order [8, pp. 65–67].

2. Terminological inconsistency. The same English item may be translated in different ways within a single text (*rules of engagement – правила участі в бойових діях / правила застосування сили; assets – активи / засоби / сили і засоби*, etc.). Without human harmonisation, this leads to semantic fuzziness [11, pp. 792–795].

3. Abbreviations and conventional symbols. Not all abbreviations (especially tactical or intra-departmental ones) are adequately represented in the open corpora on which models are trained.

4. Cultural-pragmatic nuances. Phrases such as *show of force, escalation of force, minimum necessary force* have a specific legal and ethical context. Literal or overly general translations may distort their status in documents that govern rules on the use of force.

5. Stylistic mismatch. The model often tends towards a more conversational or “generic business” style, whereas military documents require strictly standardised forms, concision, imperative constructions and the absence of ambiguity [11, pp. 798–800].

6. Security and confidentiality. Using cloud-based AI services to translate even “private” files effectively means transmitting the text to a third party. In a military environment this may be unacceptable for any materials containing tactical, operational or personal information. Safe use is therefore mainly possible for open training materials or under the condition that closed, certified solutions are employed.

Advantages of using AI assistants in military translation.

Despite the risks listed above, practical analysis makes it possible to identify several significant advantages of AI assistants, provided they are used in a controlled manner:

1. Reduced time for translating large volumes of text. AI makes it possible to produce a draft translation quickly, freeing the translator to focus on in-depth terminological analysis, stylistic harmonisation and internal editing [7, pp. 493–495].

2. Support for teachers and learners. For a military English instructor, AI is a tool for:

- rapid generation of teaching texts, exercises and tests;
- creation of bilingual glossaries;
- demonstration of typical machine translation errors and training post-editing skills within a military translation course [9, pp. 20–22].

3. Terminological sensitivity. Given a well-formulated prompt, AI can:

- suggest several variants for a term;
- generate example sentences illustrating its use;
- help identify “false friends of the translator” in English–Ukrainian military discourse [10, pp. 340–343].

4. Possibility of hybrid work models. The most rational model is one in which:

- AI functions as a tool for preliminary translation and variant generation;
- the military translator/instructor performs quality control, standardisation and final approval [7, pp. 497–500].

Limitations and drawbacks of AI assistants. At the same time, the practical examples reveal a number of critical limitations that mean AI cannot (and should not) be regarded as a substitute for the military translator:

1. Inability to guarantee zero error. In military documents, the cost of even a single error may be unacceptably high. AI does not provide legally meaningful guarantees and therefore cannot bear responsibility for the consequences.

2. *The “black box” decision-making problem.* The model does not explain why it has chosen a particular translation of a term or construction. This lack of transparency can be problematic for doctrinal and legal texts [11, pp. 798–800].

3. *Risk of professional de-skilling.* A habitual reliance on AI for routine tasks may lead to a decline in autonomous text analysis skills, terminological research and work with sources, especially among novice professionals.

4. *Operational and ethical risks.* The use of publicly available models to translate texts containing real details of operations, locations or unit composition may be categorically unacceptable from a security perspective.

Conclusions. The study has shown that military translation constitutes a distinct type of institutional discourse characterised by a high degree of terminological density, strict standardisation and elevated pragmatic risks. Unlike in many other professional domains, an error made by a military translator may have not only communicative but also operational consequences. Accordingly, the requirements for accuracy, unambiguity of formulations and correct rendering of military terms, abbreviations, acronyms and multimodal elements (diagrams, maps, tables) are fundamentally higher than in ordinary texts.

The analysis of scholarly sources has demonstrated that the development of AI technologies and neural machine translation has significantly reshaped the configuration of translation activity. AI assistants with translation functionality provide users with a number of advantages: high speed of text processing, the ability to perform preliminary translation of large volumes of material, support for terminological searches, and the creation of exercises and training corpora. They are becoming particularly attractive for military education and translation practice in the context of intensive cooperation with NATO partners and constant information load.

At the same time, a number of critical constraints and risks associated with the use of AI in military translation have been identified. These include terminological instability, potentially inaccurate rendering of modality and degree of obligation, difficulties with idiomatic, culturally and legally loaded units, as well as threats to confidentiality and cybersecurity. In the military context, these factors are of particular significance, as the documents in question may regulate the use of force, describe the tactical situation or contain sensitive information.

The practical analysis has shown that the most appropriate model is not the replacement of the human translator by an AI assistant, but a hybrid approach: the use of AI as a tool for preliminary translation, variant generation and the creation of teaching materials, followed by mandatory post-editing and expert control. In this format, AI can substantially reduce routine workload, accelerate the preparation of teaching texts and glossaries, and contribute to the development of cadets' and trainees' skills in critical reading and editing of machine-generated translations.

Thus, the use of AI assistants in military translation is advisable only within clearly defined methodological and ethical boundaries. The key role remains with the military translator and instructor as the expert responsible for standardisation, quality assessment, security and the appropriateness of AI use in specific situations. Further research should focus on developing standards and guidelines for integrating AI into the training of military translators, creating secure environments for processing sensitive information, and empirically testing

the effectiveness of hybrid “AI + human” models in real-world military communication.

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Лещенко А., Скиба О., Бунечко А. Військовий переклад в епоху ШІ-асистентів: можливості, ризики та шляхи інтеграції

Анотація. У статті розглянуто специфіку військового перекладу в контексті стрімкого поширення ШІ-асистентів із функцією перекладу текстів. Виходячи з розуміння військового перекладу як окремого різновиду інституційного дискурсу з високою термінологічною насиченістю, жорсткою стандартизацією та підвищеними прагматичними ризиками, окреслено його відмінність від інших професійних дискурсів і роль у забезпеченні ефективної військової комунікації. Показано зв'язок військового перекладу з формуванням професійної компетентності офіцерів в умовах євроатлантичної інтеграції та участі у багатонаціональних операціях. Метою статті є проаналізувати потенціал і обмеження використання нейронного машинного перекладу та діалогових ШІ-асистентів у сфері військового перекладу та навчання військового перекладу. Методологічну основу

дослідження становлять аналіз сучасних лінгвістичних і перекладознавчих праць, зіставлення характеристик військового дискурсу та можливостей ШІ-перекладу. У основній частині наведено зразки застосування ШІ-асистента для попереднього перекладу та подальшого постредагування, що дозволяє продемонструвати як переваги (швидкість і зменшення рутинного навантаження, підтримка термінологічної роботи, створення навчальних матеріалів і завдань для курсантів), так і ризики (нестабільність термінології, неточне передання модальності, можливі культурно-прагматичні спотворення, загрози конфіденційності та кібербезпеки). Обґрунтовано доцільність гібридної моделі «ШІ + людина», у межах якої ШІ-асистенти розглядаються як допоміжний інструмент попереднього перекладу та генерації варіантів, тоді як вирішальна роль у забезпеченні точності, стандартизації

та безпеки комунікації належить військовому перекладачеві й викладачеві. Зроблено висновок про необхідність розроблення методичних рекомендацій і стандартів інтеграції ШІ-інструментів у систему військової освіти та підготовку військових перекладачів.

Ключові слова: військовий переклад, військовий дискурс, штучний інтелект, ШІ-асистенти, машинний переклад, постредагування, військова освіта, термінологія, безпека комунікації.

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