

Human vs. Artificial Intelligence: Who Best Captures Tayeb Salih's Voice?

* ENNEBATI Fatima Zohra

University Centre of Maghnia (Algeria).

f.ennebati@cu-maghnia.dz¹

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Abstract:

This paper explores the challenges of translating Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North, comparing the performance of ChatGPT, DeepL, and the renowned translator Denys Johnson-Davies. Through the analysis of selected culturally rich and metaphorical excerpts, the research investigates how each translator handles figurative language, cultural references, and emotional tone drawing on Venuti's model of foreignization and domestication in handling cultural elements in translation. Findings show that while ChatGPT demonstrates surprising accuracy and fluency that is often closer to human translation, DeepL struggles with cultural depth and literary nuances. However, human translation remains unmatched in conveying the subtle emotional and cultural layers of Salih's voice. The study concludes that although AI is rapidly advancing, capturing the full literary and cultural essence of complex texts still requires human sensitivity, suggesting that a collaborative approach between AI and human translators is the most effective way forward in literary translation.

Keywords: AI, ChatGpt, Deepl, literary translation, translation accuracy.



Introduction

Translation has long been a bridge between cultures, facilitating communication and knowledge exchange across languages. With the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), machine translation has evolved from basic rule-based systems to sophisticated neural networks capable of producing near-human translations. AI-powered translation tools, such as Google Translate and OpenAI's GPT models, have

* ENNEBATI Fatima Zohra. f.ennebati@cu-maghnia.dz

significantly improved in accuracy and efficiency, making translation faster and more accessible than ever before.

However, despite these advancements, AI translation remains imperfect. Challenges such as semantic ambiguity, cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic context often result in mistranslations or loss of meaning. Unlike human translators, AI lacks deep cultural awareness, creativity, and the ability to interpret emotions and intentions behind texts. This raises important questions: Can AI truly replace human translators, or will the future of translation rely on a hybrid approach that combines human expertise with AI efficiency?

This paper explores the relationship between human and AI translation, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and potential for collaboration. By examining translations of selected Arabic excerpts from the novel of Tayeb Salih the Season of Migration to the North done by DeepL, ChatGpt and the renowned translator Dennys Davies, this paper aims to provide insights into the evolving role of translation in the age of artificial intelligence and shed light on the extent to which every method tend to foreignize or domesticate cultural utterances.

1. Literature Review

Machine translation (MT) has evolved significantly since its early conceptualization, as W. John Hutchins outlines in his paper "Machine Translation: A Brief History." (Hutchins, 1995) The study traces the development of MT from its origins in the 1950s to the present, highlighting key breakthroughs and challenges. The early stages were dominated by Rule-Based Machine Translation (RBMT), where linguistic rules were manually encoded into systems like SYSTRAN. However, the ALPAC Report (1966) criticized MT's inefficiency, leading to decreased funding and a slowdown in research (Hutchins, 1995).

Despite the setbacks, the 1970s and 1980s saw renewed interest in transfer-based and interlingua approaches, which aimed to improve translation accuracy by focusing on syntactic and semantic structures. The TAUM-METEO system in Canada successfully translated weather reports, proving that MT could work effectively within limited domains. The late 1980s introduced Statistical Machine Translation (SMT), which relied on large bilingual corpora and probabilistic models rather than linguistic rules. These advances paved the way for more adaptable MT systems (Hutchins, 1995).

By the 2000s, the emergence of corpus-based MT further improved translation accuracy. However, the most significant breakthrough came in the 2010s with the introduction of Neural Machine Translation (NMT). Unlike previous models, NMT

uses deep learning and artificial neural networks to process entire sentences in context, leading to more fluent and natural translations. The adoption of Transformer-based models (Vaswani et al., 2017) allowed AI-driven tools such as Google Translate and DeepL to outperform older MT methods (Koehn, 2020).

Despite its progress, AI translation still struggles with semantic ambiguity, cultural nuances, and idiomatic expressions. AI models lack human intuition and sometimes produce errors in context-dependent translations. Additionally, ethical concerns such as data bias and the role of human translators in an AI-driven industry continue to be debated. Many experts advocate for hybrid translation models, where AI handles routine translation tasks while human experts refine cultural and linguistic nuances (Hutchins, 1995).

Looking ahead, the future of MT lies in AI-human collaboration, real-time speech translation, and multilingual AI systems that better grasp pragmatic meaning. Hutchins concludes that while AI has significantly enhanced translation efficiency, human expertise remains indispensable for ensuring cultural accuracy and context-aware translations. As technology continues to evolve, MT systems will likely integrate more advanced contextual understanding, bridging the gap between AI-generated and human-quality translations.

1.1. Strengths of AI in Translation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized the field of translation, making multilingual communication faster, more accessible, and cost-effective. Unlike traditional human translation, AI-driven systems, particularly Neural Machine Translation (NMT), can process large volumes of text almost instantly. AI translation tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and Microsoft Translator provide real-time translation solutions for businesses, governments, and individuals, significantly reducing the time required for cross-linguistic interactions (Koehn, 2020). This speed advantage makes AI particularly useful for live translations, automated customer support, and large-scale content localization (Wu et al., 2016).

Beyond speed, AI translation is cost-effective and scalable, enabling organizations to translate vast amounts of text at a fraction of the cost of human translation. While human expertise remains essential in specialized domains such as legal, medical, and literary translation, AI is an efficient solution for routine, high-volume translations (Garcia, 2015). Companies using AI-driven translation benefit from reduced operational costs, allowing for wider global reach without requiring an extensive team of human translators (Vanmassenhove et al., 2019).

A key strength of AI in translation is its ability to continuously learn and improve. Unlike Rule-Based Machine Translation (RBMT), which required manually programmed linguistic rules, modern AI translation systems leverage deep learning and large multilingual corpora to refine their accuracy over time (Bahdanau et al., 2015). The Transformer model (Vaswani et al., 2017), which underpins state-of-the-art AI translation tools, allows machines to capture long-range dependencies in text, resulting in more coherent and natural-sounding translations.

Another major advantage of AI translation is accessibility and language inclusion. AI-driven tools provide instant multilingual communication, breaking down language barriers in business, diplomacy, education, and healthcare (Bañón et al., 2020). Furthermore, AI is being trained to support low-resource languages, ensuring that even less widely spoken languages benefit from digital translation advancements (Koehn, 2020). This democratization of translation technology fosters greater linguistic representation in global communication.

Moreover, AI translation seamlessly integrates with other technologies, making it an essential component of modern digital life. From real-time voice translation in smart assistants (Google Assistant, Siri, Alexa) to automated subtitling on platforms like YouTube and Netflix, AI translation is embedded in various applications that enhance user experience (Wu et al., 2016). Despite these advancements, AI still struggles with cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic meaning, necessitating human oversight in critical translation tasks. However, as AI continues to evolve, hybrid translation models combining AI efficiency with human expertise will likely define the future of translation.

1.2. Challenges in AI Translation

One of the foremost challenges in AI translation is the difficulty of handling semantic ambiguity and figurative language. While AI tools like Neural Machine Translation (NMT) have greatly improved in rendering grammatically correct sentences, they often fail to interpret context-dependent meanings and non-literal expressions, such as metaphors, idioms, and culturally specific phrases. For instance, literary works rich in symbolism and layered meanings like *Season of Migration to the North* pose significant difficulties for AI, as these systems typically rely on statistical patterns rather than deep contextual understanding (Koehn 2020). AI models may render idiomatic expressions literally, stripping them of their intended meaning. As Garcia (2015) argues, AI translation lacks "pragmatic intelligence," which is essential for correctly interpreting meaning beyond the sentence level.

Another critical challenge lies in the translation of culturally embedded concepts and references. Languages encode cultural knowledge that may have no direct equivalent in other languages, making such terms difficult to translate accurately without explanation. AI tools tend to either over-simplify or omit these cultural elements to maintain fluency, often resulting in a loss of cultural depth (Vanmassenhove et al. 2019). For example, terms relating to specific customs, religious practices, or historical events in Arabic literature may be flattened or misunderstood by AI, whereas human translators can provide culturally informed choices, including explanatory notes or adapted phrasing. As Bañón et al. (2020) emphasize, the lack of cultural awareness in AI translation systems remains a barrier to fully accurate and meaningful translation, especially in literary and historical texts.

A further challenge is AI's struggle with domain-specific vocabulary, particularly in specialized fields such as law, medicine, and literature. AI systems, unless specifically trained on large, domain-specific corpora, often mistranslate technical or specialized terms, leading to inaccuracies that can distort the meaning of a text (Wu et al. 2016). This limitation is particularly problematic in literary translation, where the author's word choice is deliberate and loaded with connotations. Without domain expertise, AI tends to substitute specialized vocabulary with more general or inaccurate terms, failing to maintain the author's voice and style. Koehn (2020) notes that AI models lack the human ability to recognize when a term carries multiple layers of meaning, especially when that meaning is tied to cultural or historical contexts.

In addition to that, ethical concerns and biases in AI translation represent a growing challenge. Since AI models are trained on vast datasets containing existing human-generated content, they often inherit the biases, stereotypes, and inaccuracies present in these corpora. For example, gender bias in AI translation has been widely documented, with AI tools defaulting to masculine forms even when context suggests otherwise (Vanmassenhove et al. 2019). This issue is particularly significant in literary translation, where the accurate representation of characters, social dynamics, and authorial intent is crucial. Moreover, relying solely on AI for translation raises questions about authorship, creativity, and control over the final product questions that are especially pressing when translating culturally sensitive works (Garcia 2015). Therefore, despite AI's advances, human translators remain essential for ensuring ethical, accurate, and culturally respectful translations.

1.3. The Role of Human Translators in AI-assisted Translation

Although artificial intelligence (AI), particularly Neural Machine Translation (NMT), has significantly advanced in recent years, the role of human translators

remains essential, especially in complex and culturally rich translations. AI tools such as ChatGPT and DeepL are capable of producing fluent and grammatically correct translations, but they often lack the ability to interpret context, cultural nuance, and authorial intent (Garcia, 2015). Human translators bring critical cognitive and interpretive abilities, allowing them to detect subtle meanings, emotional undertones, and cultural references that AI systems cannot fully grasp. This highlights why human intervention in AI-generated translations is crucial, particularly in fields like literature, law, and diplomacy, where precision and cultural sensitivity are indispensable (Koehn, 2020).

One of the central roles of human translators in AI-assisted translation is post-editing, a process where human experts review and refine AI-generated translations to ensure accuracy, coherence, and appropriateness (O'Brien & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2020). Through post-editing, translators correct grammatical errors, adjust style and tone, and reintroduce cultural nuances that AI may overlook. This human oversight is especially vital in literary translation, where figurative language, metaphors, and emotional resonance require careful rendering that goes beyond literal word-for-word translation. As Vanmassenhove et al. (2019) note, AI models often fail to capture gender, register, and stylistic variation, which can significantly alter the meaning of the source text if left unaddressed.

Furthermore, human translators act as cultural mediators, making critical decisions about how best to adapt culturally bound concepts for the target audience. While AI may generate a technically correct translation, it often fails to assess the appropriateness or sensitivity of certain terms, especially when dealing with taboo topics, religious references, or historical allusions (Bañón et al., 2020). Human translators possess cultural competence that allows them to ensure the translated text resonates with the target audience without distorting the original meaning. This role is increasingly important in a globalized world where communication across cultures requires more than linguistic equivalence, it demands cultural understanding and ethical awareness.

Ultimately, the collaboration between AI and human translators is key to achieving both efficiency and quality. AI tools can handle repetitive and simple translations, increasing productivity and reducing costs. However, human translators remain irreplaceable when it comes to ensuring semantic depth, cultural accuracy, and stylistic appropriateness, especially in high-stakes contexts (Koehn, 2020). As AI translation technology continues to evolve, the future of translation lies in a hybrid model, where human expertise complements AI efficiency, ensuring translations that

are not only accurate but also culturally and contextually meaningful (O'Brien & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2020).

1.4. AI Powered Translation from the Perspectives of Foreignization and Domestication

In translation studies, the concepts of foreignization and domestication, as articulated by scholars such as Lawrence Venuti and Antoine Berman, have been central to understanding how translators navigate cultural differences. Foreignization involves retaining elements of the source culture in the target text, thereby foregrounding its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. In contrast, domestication adapts the text to fit the norms and expectations of the target culture, often prioritizing fluency and reader comfort.

Venuti (1995, 1998) argues that foreignization serves as a critical intervention against the ethnocentric tendencies of translation, encouraging both translators and readers to engage with the “otherness” of the source text. This approach is not merely about preserving difference for its own sake, but about strategically disrupting the homogeneity that can result from excessive domestication. Berman (1995) similarly contends that ethical translation requires respect for the foreignness of the original, warning that ethnocentric, domesticating translations risk erasing the unique identity of the source culture.

These theoretical considerations are particularly pertinent in the context of contemporary translation technologies. While human translators can make conscious, ethical choices regarding the degree of foreignization or domestication, AI translation systems typically operate on algorithms trained to maximize fluency and user satisfaction, often defaulting to domestication. This raises important questions about the capacity of AI to recognize and preserve cultural nuances, and about the potential loss of cultural specificity when translation is automated.

Therefore, this study draws on the framework of foreignization and domestication to compare how human translators and AI systems handle cultural elements in translation. By analyzing selected excerpts, the research will assess to what extent each approach maintains or adapts cultural references, idioms, and other markers of difference. This comparison not only highlights the strengths and limitations of each method but also contributes to the ongoing debate about ethics and cultural representation in translation practice.

2. Comparative Analysis of Deepl, Chatgpt and Davies Translation of Some selected Excepts

This section presents a comparative analysis of translations produced by DeepL, ChatGPT, and Davies for selected Arabic excerpts from Tayeb Salih's novel of Season of Migration to the North. The analysis focuses on identifying differences in

lexical choices, metaphorical sentences, and overall accuracy, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each translation.

2.1. About the Novel

Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih is a profound postcolonial novel that explores themes of identity, exile, and the clash between Western and Arab cultures. Set in a Sudanese village along the Nile, the story is narrated by a man returning home after studying in Europe. There, he encounters Mustafa Sa'eed, a mysterious and educated man with a hidden past. As the narrator uncovers Mustafa's life — marked by his relationships with European women and a dark secret — the novel reflects on the lingering effects of colonialism, the complexities of cultural hybridity, and the personal struggle between tradition and modernity. Through its layered narrative, Salih's novel raises critical questions about power, cultural domination, and the search for belonging in a postcolonial world.

2.2. About Tayeb Salah

Tayeb Salih, born in 1929 in northern Sudan, spent much of his life abroad. After studying at Khartoum University, he moved to England, where he served as Head of Drama for the BBC's Arabic Service. His career also included roles as Director-General of Information in Qatar and as a representative for UNESCO in Paris and Qatar. Bridging both European and Arab cultures, Salih was deeply influenced by European and Arabic literature, as well as Islamic and Sufi traditions. Before his renowned novel Season of Migration to the North, he published The Wedding of Zein, a novella later adapted into an award-winning film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976. Salih also authored Bandarshah and several acclaimed short stories, establishing himself as one of the leading figures in modern Arabic literature.

2.3. About the translator

Denys Johnson-Davies, widely regarded as the foremost translator of Arabic fiction into English, was born in Canada and studied Arabic at the Universities of London and Cambridge. Over his career, he has published around twenty volumes, including novels, short stories, plays, and poetry from modern Arabic literature. He also serves as a Visiting Professor at the American University in Cairo.

2.4. Comparative Analysis

Excerpt 01: "و لم يمض وقت طويل حتى أحسست كأن ثلجاً يذوب في دخليتي، فكأنني مقرر طلعت عليه الشمس"

In comparing the three translations of the excerpt, notable differences emerge in terms of accuracy, precision, and word choice. DeepL's translation ("*It wasn't long*

before I felt like ice was melting in my insides and I was like a sunburnt turkey") is problematic and inaccurate, as it introduces an unfounded and culturally inappropriate image "sunburnt turkey" that distorts the intended meaning of a person thawed and warmed by the sun. The choice of words fails to preserve the emotional and metaphorical depth of the original Arabic, making this version ineffective.

By contrast, ChatGPT's translation (*"It wasn't long before I felt as if ice were melting inside me, as though I were a chilled man warmed by the rising sun"*) offers an accurate, precise, and culturally faithful rendering, capturing both the internal sensation of warmth and the poetic quality of the metaphor. It maintains the human element of "مقروور" (a person chilled by cold), which DeepL omits.

Davies translation (*"And it was not long before I felt as though a piece of ice were melting inside of me, as though I were some frozen substance on which the sun had shone"*) is more accurate and emotionally resonant; the translator uses another image to compare the chilly man to "some frozen substance", as he knows that Arabs are not used to cold which is often associated with a feeling of discomfort and incapacity. So, he successfully renders the human and poetic dimensions of the original. Therefore, among the three, Davies offers the most balanced translation in terms of faithfulness, emotional weight, and cultural sensitivity, though ChatGpt also provides an accurate but less effective translation in terms of cultural imagery. Whereas Davies translation tends to foreignize the translation, ChatGpt seems to domesticate it using the image of warmth associated to the sun as experienced in western societies.

Excerpt 02: "كنت سعيداً تلك الأيام، كطفل يرى وجهه في المرأة لأول مرة"

In comparing the three translations, we observe varying degrees of accuracy, precision, and stylistic fluency. DeepL's translation (*"I was happy those days, like a child seeing his face in the mirror for the first time"*) is accurate and simple, but lacks a slight grammatical polish, adding "in" before "those days" would make the sentence smoother. Nevertheless, it preserves the meaning and conveys the simile effectively.

ChatGpt's translation (*"I was happy in those days, like a child gazing at his reflection in the mirror for the very first time"*) is elegant and refined. It not only adds the natural phrasing "in those days", but also replaces "seeing his face" with "gazing at his reflection", enhancing the poetic tone and emotional depth of the metaphor. The addition of "for the very first time" emphasizes the sense of wonder and innocence, making this version both faithful and stylistically enriched.

Davies' translation ("*I was happy during those days, like a child that sees its face in the mirror for the first time*") is grammatically correct but slightly awkward in phrasing, particularly with "a child that sees its face", which feels more mechanical and less fluid. We think that the use of 'its' instead 'his' was done on purpose to reveal the lack of experience of life and knowledge and also the naivety of the child. The translator succeeds in revealing the feelings of the author about himself once he was an innocent child and foreignizes the image of viewing children in some arab social contexts . Thus, while all three translations convey the basic meaning, this translation rendered the hidden meanings, though the second one seems to show more poetic resonance and smoothness. The first translation is acceptable too, but plain.

Excerpt 03: "لم يكن ثمة أدنى شك في أن الرجل من عجينة أخرى"

In comparing the three translations, we can see different approaches to conveying the metaphor and tone. DeepL's translation ("*There was no doubt that the man was of a different calibre*") uses a common English idiom, "of a different calibre," to indicate the man's uniqueness or superiority. While this captures the intended meaning, it neutralizes the metaphor of "عجينة أخرى" (another clay or mold) and loses the imagery of creation and essence present in the Arabic expression.

ChatGpt's translation ("*There was no doubt that the man was cut from a different cloth*") offers a well-known English idiom that aligns closely with the Arabic metaphor. The expression "cut from a different cloth" conveys both difference in character and essence, making it culturally adapted yet metaphorically rich, and thus the most natural and idiomatic rendering.

Davies translation ("*There was not the slightest doubt that the man was of a different clay*") stays closest to the literal meaning and imagery of the Arabic text by preserving the image of clay, but it feels less familiar to English speakers and somewhat unnatural as a metaphor in English. The translator seems to have a significant understanding of the Arabic culture and tends to render the same metaphorical loads, though this foreignization strategy may lead to a more literal and less idiomatic translation. The AI translations tend to domesticate the imagery which symbolises the creation of man though it is familiar in different religions and civilizations.

Excerpt 04: "أنت آلة صماء"

The comparison of the three translations reveals significant differences in how the adjective "صماء" is interpreted and conveyed in English. DeepL's translation ("*You are a deaf machine*") is a literal rendering, but in English, calling a machine "deaf"

is unusual and awkward, as "deaf" typically refers to living beings, not objects. Thus, although literal, this version feels unnatural and unclear in English.

ChatGpt's translation ("*You are a lifeless machine*") moves away from literalness and instead captures the intended meaning of "صماء" as something unresponsive, void of emotion or reaction. This version is natural and expressive, reflecting the idea of someone being cold and unfeeling.

Davies translation ("*You are a heartless machine*") takes a more figurative and emotional approach, using "heartless" to emphasize lack of empathy and human warmth, which is a valid interpretation with regard to its context in the novel. Both the second and third translations are idiomatic and effective, but the second leans more on the idea of emotional emptiness, while the third emphasizes cruelty or indifference. Hence, depending on context, "heartless machine" fits better as the intended tone in the original text is more accusatory and emotional. Here too, the translator conveys the image that is used in the Arabic culture by maintaining it using the strategy of foreignization.

Excerpt 05: "كان عقلي كأنه مدية حادة"

In comparing the three translations, we observe subtle differences in word choice, precision, and stylistic impact. DeepL's translation ("*My mind was like a sharp knife*") is accurate and straightforward, conveying the intended comparison clearly. However, "knife" is a very common word in English, and while correct, it lacks a poetic or elevated tone, making the image somewhat plain.

ChatGpt's translation ("*My mind was as sharp as a blade*") uses a more idiomatic and refined English expression. The word "blade" sounds more poetic and less ordinary than "knife," enhancing the metaphor's intensity and elegance. The phrase "as sharp as a blade" is also a familiar English idiom for describing keen intellect, making this translation natural and effective in literary terms.

Davies translation ("*My mind was like a keen knife*") introduces "keen" as a synonym for sharp, which adds a slight sense of precision and intensity. The use of "keen" as an adjective that collocates with knife added a poetic and elevated tone as it is used in literary context and strongly expresses the connotation of the original phrase.

Excerpt 06: "في لحظة لا تزيد عن مقدار ما يشيل البرق ثم يختفي"

After comparing the three translations, we notice differences in the rendering of the sentence idiomaticity. DeepL's translation *"In an instant, no more than a flash of lightning and then it's gone"* is accurate and clear, capturing the sense of swiftness expressed in the original Arabic. The phrase "no more than a flash of lightning" preserves the metaphor effectively. However, "and then it's gone" slightly breaks the poetic flow, making it sound more conversational than literary. though, it remains a faithful and understandable rendering.

ChatGpt's translation "In a fleeting moment, as brief as a flash of lightning vanishing from the sky" is the most poetic and refined. It maintains the imagery of lightning and emphasizes brevity and disappearance through "vanishing from the sky", adding a beautiful, natural flow to the sentence. This version enhances the aesthetic quality of the metaphor, making it suitable for literary contexts.

Davies translation *"In an instant that was no longer than the twinkling of an eye"* introduces a different English idiom ("twinkling of an eye") instead of sticking to the lightning metaphor. While this is a well-known English expression for extreme brevity, it moves away from the vivid imagery of lightning present in the Arabic text. Although idiomatic and natural, it loses the specific visual and emotional impact of the original.

While all three translations convey the idea of a brief moment, the second translation stands out for its poetic elegance and faithfulness to the lightning imagery. The first is clear and accurate but less refined, while the third, though idiomatic, moves too far from the original metaphor, sacrificing the unique cultural and emotional resonance. Davies opted for a domestication strategy replacing the image by an equivalent one in the English language. His choice does not effect the preservation of cultural norms since the idea is successfully transmitted.

Except 06: "يلازميني في حلي وترحالي"

The three translations of this phrase vary in terms word choice and poetic tone. DeepL's translation *"It accompanies me on my travels"* captures part of the meaning but is too limited, as it reduces the phrase to "travels" only. In Arabic, "حلي وترحالي" refers to both one's movements and periods of stillness, meaning whether settled or traveling. Therefore, this translation misses the full scope of the phrase and narrows its meaning.

ChatGpt's translation *"It follows me in all my comings and goings"* is more accurate and expressive, reflecting the sense of constant presence in all circumstances. The phrase "comings and goings" is an established English idiom,

conveying movement and daily life, which respects the spirit of the Arabic expression.

Davies translation "*that was as ever with me in my comings and goings*" is equally accurate and gives a more literary tone with "that was ever with me," adding a sense of permanence and closeness. This version emphasizes continuous companionship in a way that reflects the deep emotional undertone of the Arabic phrase. Moreover, it offers a more literary feeling and keeps the assonance that exists in the original phrase. Accurate translation is always seen as faithful to the original to the point of not make it lose its cultural identity, and the translator in this case has shown great awareness about which elements to preserve, successfully drawing on foreignization and domestication strategies that shape his overall translation.

Conclusion

Through the comparative analysis of various translated expressions, this study highlights the nuanced differences between translations produced by AI tools (such as DeepL and ChatGPT) and those rendered by the translator. The findings reveal that while AI-generated translations are often grammatically correct and semantically close, they frequently struggle with capturing cultural depth, figurative language, and emotional resonance, which are essential in literary texts. For instance, AI tools sometimes produce literal translations that miss idiomatic meanings, introduce awkward or culturally inappropriate expressions, or dilute the poetic imagery of the source text.

On the other hand, the translator demonstrates a greater capacity for interpreting cultural references, maintaining metaphorical richness, and adapting expressions to fit the target language's literary and cultural norms. Making his translations preserving the emotional and aesthetic impact of the original Arabic text, thanks to their cultural sensitivity, contextual understanding, and creative linguistic choices which were guided by foreignization and domestication strategies.

These observations underscore the necessity of human intervention in literary translation, particularly when dealing with texts rich in cultural and figurative elements. While AI can serve as a helpful tool for initial drafts or simple communication, the role of human translators remains indispensable for ensuring cultural fidelity, artistic nuance, and emotional depth. Therefore, a hybrid approach that combines AI efficiency with human expertise appears to be the most promising path forward, allowing for both speed and quality in the translation process, especially, in sensitive and complex genres like literature.

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