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Redefining Translator Training Paradigm in Ukraine: AI Integration and Compliance with European Standards

This article examines critical challenges facing translator training in Ukraine, driven by rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and neural machine translation (NMT), and highlights the need to align national education with international translation standards. Recent developments in AI and neural machine translation have significantly enhanced translation efficiency and accuracy, influencing translator roles worldwide and emphasizing the necessity of adapting educational approaches accordingly. The purpose of the research is to identify existing gaps in language proficiency, translation technology competencies, and skills resilient to automation within Ukrainian higher education curricula, proposing targeted reforms. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, analyzing quantitative data from university programs and qualitative assessments of curricular documentation. Key findings reveal substantial disparities in students' initial language proficiency, insufficient integration of translation technologies, and inadequate preparation for machine translation post-editing tasks. The study concludes that significant improvements in language training are necessary to enable students to effectively post-edit AI-generated translations and undertake complex, specialized tasks beyond routine translation. Recommendations include implementing standardized entry-level proficiency testing, restructuring curricula in accordance with European Master's in Translation (EMT) standards, and integrating comprehensive machine translation post-editing (MTPE) courses. Future research should empirically evaluate the effectiveness of these reforms and explore comparative international contexts.

Key words: *AI-driven translation, curriculum modernization, machine translation, post-editing, translation competence, translator training.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem statement

Ukraine's translation education system faces critical challenges amid rapid technological developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation (MT), alongside the aligning national standards with the European translation standards due to the country's ongoing EU accession process. Research [6] suggests that MT quality will likely continue improving, with projections like the 2032 market value indicating sustained growth. An interesting detail is that even with high BLEU scores, MT may never fully replace human translators for nuanced content, as noted in the American Translators Association's guide on MT limitations [1].

Recent MT quality evaluations, such as WMT22 (see, for example, [15]), show that for high-resource language pairs, AI-driven systems achieve BLEU scores up to 50 for similar pairs like English to German, suggesting English to French would follow suit if included, with top systems scoring 46.5 BLEU for English to French in prior years, indicating continued progress. LLMs and transformer-based models, like those in Google Translate and DeepL, have further enhanced quality, with Intento's 2024 report highlighting LLMs excelling in domains like colloquial and entertainment content [9]. There are several factors contributing to the likelihood of continued improvement in MT quality. With technological advancements, NMT and LLMs, such as transformer models, have revolutionized MT, with simultaneous translation methods reducing latency [21]. With increased data availability, larger parallel corpora, like Europarl and Common Crawl, better training is enabled, especially for high-resource pairs. Also, major tech companies (Google, Microsoft, etc.) and academic institutions consistently participate in improving MT translation quality, driving innovation. Even short prose and poems can be translated by current translation systems on par with an average translator, with only at most two days' editing [10; 11], to say nothing about translating special-domain texts. We can surely state that the progress of NMT and AI-driven translation is inevitable and this must be taken into account in all spheres of human activities, including higher education, in particular, translation teaching.

Currently, translation agencies around the world commonly use machine translation, including AI-driven systems, to handle clients' translation orders. This approach helps them manage large volumes of work efficiently, especially for tasks like social media content or high-volume projects. However, they often pair it with human review to ensure accuracy and cultural nuance, particularly for sensitive or technical documents.

Machine translation, powered by AI like neural networks, is used to generate initial drafts quickly, which human translators then refine. This hybrid model is popular for its speed and cost-effectiveness, with agencies like Lionbridge [14] and Stepes [20] integrating tools like Smart MT™ and machine translation post-editing (MTPE) into their workflows. RWS, another major translation industry player, mentions AI-enabled technology blended with human expertise, suggesting machine translation is part of their process [19]. Stepes offers machine translation services with MTPE, leveraging neural algorithms and translation memory to improve quality [20]. LanguageWire, ranked 23rd in Slator's 2024 Language Service Provider Index, is noted for its focus on post-edited machine translation [13].

An interesting trend is the rapid growth of the machine translation market, projected to reach $7.57 billion by 2032, with over 30% of professional translation business already using it, according to the European Language Industry Survey 2023 [17]. This shows a significant shift toward technology in the industry, even as some agencies, especially smaller ones, prefer human-only translations for quality reasons. Generally, research suggests that many translation agencies worldwide use machine translation, including AI-driven systems, for clients' translation orders. The evidence leans toward widespread adoption, especially among larger agencies, though some smaller ones may rely solely on human translators.

Thus, the landscape of translator training has reached a decisive juncture. Emerging technologies, notably generative AI and machine translation, have drastically transformed both professional practices and market expectations, prompting an existential reconsideration of traditional translator education models. While these innovations introduce unprecedented efficiency, they simultaneously pose profound questions about the core competencies translators must possess to maintain relevance. Central to these developments is a pedagogical tension between fostering language proficiency and adapting to technological evolution, an issue amplified by differing entry-level proficiencies among translation students in wartime Ukraine.

1.2. Relevance of the research

The urgency to address these issues is magnified by Ukraine's current geopolitical trajectory, specifically its ongoing negotiations for European Union accession. The ongoing war triggered the shift from a more holistic system to the National Multi-Subject Test which has created significant disparities in students' initial language proficiency, complicating efforts to maintain language standards required for professional translation, especially given that students may enroll with minimal or no foreign language skills assessed.

High-quality professional translation is critical for harmonizing Ukrainian legal and administrative frameworks with European Union standards, where linguistic precision and translation quality hold strategic importance [4; 16]. Ozolins [16] analyzes language policy in the Baltic States, illustrating how translation served as a cornerstone for harmonizing governance and ensuring minority-language rights during post-Soviet transitions.

Biel [4] and Cameron [5] examine EU accession processes, highlighting the complexities of legal and administrative translation in newly integrated contexts.

Furthermore, given the expected surge in demand for proficient translators to support Ukraine's integration into the EU's multilingual communication environment, the alignment of Ukraine's translation education with European Master's in Translation (EMT) standards has become not merely relevant but strategically imperative. Ensuring translator proficiency aligns with the European Master's in Translation (EMT) standards is essential not only for the successful integration of Ukraine into the EU's multilingual and multicultural landscape but also to enhance the employability and professional credibility of Ukrainian translation graduates within the broader European and global market. Additionally, addressing curricular shortcomings can facilitate academic mobility and align Ukrainian educational standards more closely with European practices.

1.3. Brief analysis of recent research and previously unresolved issues

Recent scholarship has extensively discussed the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation (MT) on translator training and professional practices. At the core of current discourse is the challenge posed by automation to traditional translation roles, prompting a fundamental reevaluation of translator competencies.

Zhu [22] argues that with AI and MT increasingly dominating routine translation tasks, human translators must cultivate skills that machines cannot replicate — particularly creativity and cultural sensitivity. Zhu's empirical research, involving a semester-long integration of transcreation in translator training, demonstrated measurable improvements in students' perceived employability, thereby underscoring the need for curricula to integrate creative adaptation skills, especially relevant in marketing, advertising, and intercultural communication contexts.

Other studies focus on pedagogical strategies for integrating machine translation into translator training. Pym and Hao [8] propose a framework wherein students systematically compare human and machine outputs, conduct post-editing, and investigate biases in AI-driven translations. They stress that pre-editing—an often-overlooked technique—can significantly boost MT accuracy while sharpening students' critical thinking. Ayvazyan et al. [2] similarly promote hands-on experimentation, prompting students to compare unaided and AI-assisted translations, assess time–quality trade-offs, and refine MT prompts for better results. Although these approaches recognize the efficiency gains offered by AI, they consistently emphasize that human oversight remains indispensable, particularly in creative domains and literary texts.

A recurring theme is the controversial nature of post-editing (PE), which dominates many industrial workflows but raises concerns about compensation, quality, and professional identity [19]. While PE can streamline processes, it may also entail limited remuneration and potentially lower levels of job satisfaction. The tension between automation and fair compensation thus emerges as a persistent challenge. Ayvazyan, Torres-Simón, and Pym [3] further explore automation-resistant competencies, identifying transcreation, domain-specific expertise, and client communication as skills that preserve the translator's added value in an AI-driven market. They propose enhanced instruction in project management, post-editing, and prompt engineering, recommending that translator training move beyond conventional per-word pricing models.

Discussing the previously assumed immunity of the creative side of translation to full automation, literary post-editing has attracted increasing attention. Hao, Hu, and Pym [8] compare post-edited outputs and human translations, finding that PE boosts productivity yet risks introducing stylistic inconsistencies due to overreliance on machine-generated phrasing. Students, while initially skeptical of "deceptively fluent" MT outputs, begin to appreciate more interactive MT systems like DeepL and Lilt, which offer alternative suggestions and foster higher degrees of human control.

Overall, the literature converges on three key unresolved issues. First, translating creativity as a somewhat insulated skill of a human translation into curricular design remains challenging. A separate issue arises when teaching post-editing in specialized fields, each of which requires domain-specific knowledge and the ability to identify terminological or stylistic inaccuracies that machine outputs may obscure. Finally, ensuring equitable compensation and sustainable career paths in an AI-driven industry presents an ongoing concern, urging stakeholders to explore enhanced professional roles.

1.4. Study goal and tasks

This article aims to assess and propose targeted reforms for translator training curricula at Ukrainian higher education institutions. Specifically, the study addresses the following tasks:

- Analyze current curricula to determine gaps in language proficiency outcomes against CEFR and EMT standards.
- Evaluate the impact of entry-level proficiency variability among students due to existing admission policies.
- Identify curricular deficiencies regarding translation technology competencies, translation project management, and automation-resistant translation skills.
- Explore potential solutions to bridge the aforementioned gaps.

1.5. Course of solutions proposed in the article

The article begins by examining proficiency discrepancies resulting from the current Ukrainian

university admission policy, assessing the feasibility of achieving EMT-required language proficiency within existing curricular frameworks. It then outlines the impact of mixed-ability classroom environments on student progression and proposes measures to standardize language proficiency at the entry point. Subsequently, the study recommends curricular adjustments to integrate comprehensive training in machine translation, post-editing, translation technologies, and project management, explicitly aligning Ukrainian translator training programs with EMT competencies and EU market requirements.

2. MODERNIZATION OF TRANSLATOR TRAINING UNDER AI ADVANCES AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

2.1. Object of the research

The object of this research is the evolving paradigm of translator training in Ukraine, driven by two principal factors: the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in global language services and the country's growing need to align with European Union (EU) standards. The focus lies on how academic institutions can modernize their curricula to meet both technological and policy-driven requirements.

2.2. Subject of the research

The processes and criteria underpinning the modernization of Ukrainian translator education to meet AI-based industry demands while ensuring compliance with European Union standards for language proficiency and professional competencies that already exist or are newly emerging as the translator role is being redefined.

2.3. Theoretical foundations

This research is grounded in established theories and models from the field of translator training, drawing on several key frameworks that inform curriculum design, competence acquisition, and assessment methodologies. Central to modern translator education are competence-based models that delineate the multifaceted skills required of professional translators. Building on foundational contributions, current theorists emphasize the integration of linguistic and extralinguistic abilities, technological literacy, and domain-specific knowledge. These models guide the structuring of course objectives, pedagogical techniques, and evaluation criteria in translator training programs.

The EMT framework [7] provides a comprehensive outline of competencies needed for translators working in complex, multilingual contexts. It prioritizes language and culture proficiency, translation service provision, technological skills, project management, and professional/ethical behavior — all of which must be demonstrably taught, practiced, and assessed within academic curricula. The EMT also promotes a market-oriented perspective, urging translator training programs to adapt continuously to technological innovations and industry demands.

As translator trainees often need at least two working languages at an advanced (C1 or above) level, the CEFR serves as a benchmark for linguistic development. Beyond merely categorizing proficiency levels, the CEFR provides practical descriptors that inform both curriculum planning — particularly regarding language skills progression ***(Table 1)*** [12] — and the design of placement and exit assessments. This alignment ensures that learners' language acquisition goals dovetail with the broader professional requirements of translation practice.

Table 1

Cumulative and incremental guided study hours required for CEFR progression

CEFR Level	Cumulative Hours Range	Incremental Hours Range
A1	90-100	90-100
A2	180-200	90–100
B1	350-400	170–200
B2	500-600	150–200
C1	700-800	200–300
C2	1000-1200	300–400

Recent developments in neural machine translation (NMT) and large language models (LLMs) have prompted a shift in translator competence frameworks. Contemporary training theories now advocate a socio-constructivist approach, where students learn to critically engage with AI outputs, refine post-editing techniques, and develop strategies for identifying and correcting errors. This pedagogical orientation encourages reflection, collaboration, and iterative experimentation, aligning with theories in translator education that emphasize real-world tasks and problem-solving under authentic conditions.

Within an EU-oriented paradigm, this means instructors and program designers must account for multicultural communication, domain-specific specialization, and the complexities of cross-border translation projects. By situating translator training within actual market demands, these theories reinforce the importance of project-based learning, internships, and partnerships with industry stakeholders.

2.4. Material and methods of research

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the modernization of translator training in Ukraine. Three major universities - Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (KNU), Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (LNU), and V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (KhNU) - were selected as primary data sources due to their established translator training programs.

Quantitative data were collected from official university documents and course catalogs, particularly focusing on admission pathways for undergraduate and graduate programs. This included analysis of ECTS credit distribution (***Table 2***) and required language proficiency levels to evaluate the extent to which current entry requirements align with European Master's in Translation (EMT) guidelines.

Table 2

Language ECTS credits and guided study hours allocated to undergraduate training programs at KNU, LNU, KhNU

University	ECTS Credits (English)	Guided Hours (English)	ECTS Credits (second language)	Guided Hours (second language)
KNU	42	630	25	375
LNU	48	720	31	465
KhNU	42	630	41	615

Qualitative data comprised a systematic review of existing master's curricula, including syllabi and program descriptions, to determine whether they emphasize theoretical research or incorporate practical translation competencies. Particular attention was paid to the integration of translation technology tools (e.g., machine translation, post-editing) and project management components in response to industry needs.

In parallel, we conducted a comparative examination of policy and procedural documents for each institution's admissions process, paying special attention to optional English testing at the undergraduate level and the alignment of master's program requirements with CEFR-based proficiency thresholds. The combined insights from quantitative ECTS data and qualitative curriculum evaluations were then synthesized to draw conclusions about the preparedness of Ukrainian translator education programs to meet both national and EU accession demands, as well as the growing influence of AI-based workflows in the translation industry.

2.5. Results and Discussion

2.5.1. Influence of the NMT and mixed-ability classes

The NMT is optional for English, creating heterogeneous proficiency levels in first-year cohorts. Approximately half of all incoming students enroll on a contract basis, bypassing stricter language thresholds. Consequently, instructors often face classes where advanced students are slowed by those at or below B1. This dynamic obstructs cohesive progression to C1, a core requirement for EMT.

To address this, one proposed solution is implementing mandatory English testing by incorporating a compulsory English exam within the NMT for undergraduate translation programs and enforcing a minimum score to establish a consistent baseline. If this is not feasible, universities can bridge the skill gap through enhanced ECTS allocation, providing additional credits to students with lower English proficiency and ensuring that all translation program students can realistically reach C1 by graduation. This level should then be assessed as part of the admission process for graduate translation programs in English.

2.5.2. EU translation compliance and EMT alignment

Ukraine's prospective EU membership necessitates large-scale legal and administrative translations that conform to European standards. Although LNU, KNU, and KhNU each allocate enough hours for a B1 student to reach C1 in English, incoming cohorts frequently include students with suboptimal English proficiency. Table 3 reveals that bridging the gap from A2 to C1 could be only possible at LNU. For a second foreign language, shortfalls are even more pronounced, as none of the universities meet the over 1000 guided hours needed to raise an A0 learner to C1.

Table 3

Potential levels achieved based on allocated English and second language hours

University	English Start Level: A2	English Start Level: B1	English Start Level: B2	Second language Start Level: A0
KNU	B2+	C1	C1+	B1
LNU	C1	C1+	C2	B1+
KhNU	B2+	C1	C1+	B2

To address these gaps, proposed solutions include increasing credit allocation for second languages, ensuring that students starting from A0/A1 can realistically achieve C1 by graduation and meet EMT requirements in both foreign languages. Alternatively, a nationwide baseline for second-language proficiency at graduation could be established, making it a requirement for translation program degrees that include two foreign languages. This would be reinforced through standardized exams and adjustments to graduate curricula, ensuring that second-language proficiency reaches at least C1 within the first half of the master's program.

2.5.3. Admission and structural issues within Master's programs

Master's-level curricula are often classified as Educational-Scientific, rather than Educational-Professional focusing on theoretical research over practical translation techniques. Moreover, the Unified Entrance Exam typically caps English proficiency at B1–B2, which is insufficient for EMT compliance. Professional Exams rarely include comprehensive language proficiency testing and lack technological components such post-editing with CAT-tools, and mainly focus on translation analysis and old-school unaided written translation, which hardly reflects the necessary translation skills and competencies.

To remedy these shortcomings, proposed measures include revising admission criteria to require at least

C1-level proficiency for entry into master's translation programs and expanding the professional exam to assess computer-aided translation and technology skills. Additionally, master's program tracks should be more clearly defined in both program names and course offerings: research-oriented courses should be available for those pursuing translation studies and academic careers, while professional-oriented master's degrees should emphasize practical training and job-specific skills for advanced translator preparation.

2.5.4. Advanced AI Integration and Future-Proofing Translation Training in the Age of Automation

Although universities in the country have introduced limited modules on machine translation (MT) and post-editing (PE), these offerings generally lag behind the industry's widespread adoption of neural MT workflows in sectors such as e-commerce, IT, and life sciences [19]. Moreover, while post-editing now ranks among the most common services within Language Service Providers (LSPs), concerns persist regarding the low compensation and perceived lack of career progression associated with PE tasks [8].

Currently, MTPE must play a rather vital role in university translation teaching, especially in the context of integrating advanced AI-driven translation tools. The educational program for translators at the bachelor's and master's level should include a course on machine translation post-editing. For bachelors, this could be a 10-credit introductory practical course called "Fundamentals of Machine Translation Post-Editing" that will give a general idea of this discipline and allow them to gain basic knowledge of this process and acquire basic post-editing skills. For master's students, a more detailed post-editing course, Advanced MTPE, should be introduced, designed for 30 credits, which will include both lectures and practical classes in several key areas where MTPE can be effectively incorporated into translation curricula: skill development (practical application providing students with hands-on experience in working with machine-generated translations, which may help them understand how to assess the quality of AI outputs and make necessary adjustments to improve accuracy and fluency, critical analysis by engaging in post-editing, students may develop critical analysis skill learning to identify errors, ambiguities, and areas where the machine translation lacks contextual understanding, enabling them to refine their linguistic and cultural expertise, industry relevance to prepare them for the translation job market as the demand for translators proficient in MTPE is constantly growing in the industry (by incorporating this practice into the curriculum, universities can better prepare students for careers in translation, localization, and content creation, where post-editing skills are increasingly required), collaboration with translation technology as learning MTPE emphasizes the collaborative nature of modern translation work with students mastering how to work alongside AI tools, thereby understanding how to leverage these technologies to enhance their productivity and the quality of their translations). It must be noted that starting in the next academic year, 2025-2026, the Educational and Research Institute of Philology of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv is to introduce a machine translation post-editing course for first-year master's students majoring in Translation and Interpretation.

At the undergraduate level, programs should be reconfigured to incorporate robust skills in post-editing, pre-editing, and automated workflow optimization. Students would benefit from guided exercises in analyzing and refining outputs from widely used MT engines—such as DeepL, Google MT, or ModernMT—thereby developing the critical thinking required to identify subtle mistranslations and address "deceptive fluency" [8]. In addition, universities should strengthen instruction in specialized fields, including legal and technical translation, given Ukraine's projected need for high-precision, regulation-compliant services. Furthermore, curricula must expand the scope of translation management training; many current programs offer only cursory coverage of this domain, despite its growing relevance as project managers increasingly oversee complex, technology-intensive assignments [1; 19].

Educational-professional graduate programs should subsequently build on these foundations by emphasizing advanced automation strategies, field specialization, and entrepreneurial skills. Students at this stage not only need to master post-editing workflows but also require instruction on customizing MT engines for specific tasks and refining prompt engineering techniques. The integration of specialized modules on Regulatory and Compliance Translation or Diplomatic and Institutional Translation & Interpretation —would better prepare graduates for high-stakes, large-scale translation endeavors, in line with Ukraine's EU accession trajectory. Additionally, graduate curricula should focus on equipping students with project management, business analytics, and leadership capabilities, reflecting the industry's shift from per-word billing to hourly or project-based models [3; 8].

3. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of current challenges and curricular gaps within Ukrainian translator education, particularly highlighting the critical impact of rapid advancements in machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI), alongside the country's strategic move towards alignment with European Union (EU) translation standards. The findings indicate that Ukrainian translator training must undergo significant reform to effectively respond to technological innovations and meet international standards.

The theoretical significance of this research lies in its detailed exploration of the interface between evolving AI-driven translation technologies and traditional translation education frameworks. It enriches existing translator training theories by emphasizing the integration of technological competencies such as machine translation post-editing (MTPE), pre-editing, and translation project management within a competence-based curricular model aligned with the European Master's in Translation (EMT) framework. Crucially, the study underscores the necessity of significantly enhancing language training so students can proficiently post-edit outputs from AI and neural machine translation, and expand their competencies beyond routine translation tasks toward more complex, specialized, and creative translation roles.

The results obtained in this study can be generalized beyond Ukraine to other contexts experiencing similar technological disruptions and international standardization demands. The demonstrated need for structured interventions to address mixed-ability student groups, proficiency standardization, and curricular adaptations provides a valuable reference model for educational institutions internationally, particularly in regions undergoing integration into multilingual, multicultural frameworks.

Looking forward, specific prospects for further research include empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of proposed curricular reforms, particularly the implementation of advanced MTPE courses at both undergraduate and master's levels. Additional research should also explore the long-term impacts of integrating translation technologies on graduates' employability and professional trajectories, assessing how well these educational adjustments meet evolving market demands. Furthermore, comparative studies across different national contexts could offer deeper insights into best practices and foster broader adoption of innovative translator education strategies globally.

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ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ ПАРАДИГМИ ПІДГОТОВКИ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧІВ В УКРАЇНІ: ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ З AI ТА ВІДПОВІДНІСТЬ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИМ СТАНДАРТАМ

Стаття присвячена аналізу важливих викликів у сфері підготовки перекладачів в Україні, спричинених стрімким розвитком штучного інтелекту (ШІ) та нейронного машинного перекладу (НМП), і наголошує на важливості адаптації національної освіти до міжнародних перекладацьких стандартів. Новітні досягнення у сфері ШІ та нейронного машинного перекладу суттєво підвищили ефективність та точність перекладу, впливаючи на роль перекладачів у світі та актуалізацію необхідності адаптації освітніх підходів. Метою дослідження є виявлення прогалин у мовній підготовці, технологічних компетенціях перекладача та навичках, стійких до автоматизації, в існуючих навчальних програмах з перекладу українських закладів вищої освіти, а також розробка цільових рекомендацій для їх усунення. У дослідженні застосовано змішаний метод аналізу, що охоплює кількісні дані навчальних програм та якісні оцінки документації. Основні результати свідчать про значні розбіжності у початковому рівні мовної підготовки студентів, недостатню інтеграцію технологій перекладу та неадекватну підготовку до пост-редагування машинних перекладів. Висновки дослідження підкреслюють необхідність суттєвого посилення мовної підготовки, що дозволить студентам ефективно виконувати постредагування текстів, створених ШІ, та вирішувати складні завдання, які виходять за межі рутинного перекладу. Запропоновано запровадити стандартизоване тестування мовної компетенції, перебудову навчальних програм за стандартами Європейського магістра перекладу (EMT) та курси з постредагування машинного перекладу (MTPE). Подальші дослідження мають емпірично оцінити ці реформи та порівняти міжнародний досвід.

Ключові слова: *машинний переклад, модернізація програм, переклад з використанням ШІ, перекладацька компетенція, підготовка перекладачів, постредагування.*

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