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### Pavlo Shopin

Doctor of Philosophy in German, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Language Studies, Comparative Linguistics and Translation, Mykhailo Drahomanov State University of Ukraine; e-mail: [p.yu.shopin@udu.edu.ua](mailto:p.yu.shopin@udu.edu.ua); ORCID: [0000-0002-8022-5327](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8022-5327); GOOGLE SCHOLAR: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=4Oq-acwAAAAJ>; RESEARCH GATE: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pavlo-Shopin-2>

## STUDENT GROUP TRANSLATION AS A CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

This article examines collaborative student translation as a cultural and educational practice. The object of the study is an educational and cultural diplomacy project focused on the English translation of Mykhailo Liakh's essay "Between Drahomanov and Marx: The Political Life of Lesya Ukrainka," carried out by twelve students from Mykhailo Drahomanov State University of Ukraine. The subject of the research is the pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural dynamics of group translation as a method of learning and intercultural engagement. The purpose of the article is to determine the role of collaborative translation in developing the professional competencies and critical historical awareness of student translators, as well as to explore how such translation projects contribute to the international recognition of Ukrainian political and intellectual traditions. This study is relevant in the context of ongoing efforts to globalize Ukrainian intellectual heritage, particularly in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion. Against this backdrop, the participants approached translation both as a linguistic task and as a form of cultural diplomacy and civic engagement. The research method combines case study analysis, participant observation, and editorial critique of student drafts within the broader context of translation pedagogy and public scholarship. The research material includes the original Ukrainian text by Mykhailo Liakh, its English translation, and the iterative revisions made by students and the professor that led to the final published version. The project demonstrates that collaborative student translation can function both as a pedagogical model and as a form of cultural diplomacy, offering students the opportunity to act as mediators of national history for international audiences. Future research could explore the cultural potential of translation through the analysis of other student-translated popular texts under the author's supervision, the role of translation in the decolonization of knowledge, the ethical integration of AI tools in translation education, and translation as civic engagement in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War.

**Key words:** collaborative translation, Lesya Ukrainka, Mykhailo Drahomanov, student translation, translation as cultural diplomacy, translation pedagogy, translation of academic texts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research investigates an educational translation experiment: the collaborative student translation of Mykhailo Liakh's (Михайло Лях) 2021 article, "Between Drahomanov and Marx: The Political Life of Lesya Ukrainka" («Між Драгомановим і Маркса. Політичне життя Лесі Українки») [8; 4]. The translation was carried out by 12 BA and MA students from the Faculty of Foreign Philology under my supervision, as part of their internship with the *Commons* journal. This case illustrates how student translators can meaningfully contribute to the globalization of Ukrainian intellectual history while simultaneously acquiring professional competencies and deepening their understanding of Ukrainian historical culture.

The aim of the study is twofold. First, it is intended to assess the pedagogical value of group translation in developing students' ability to translate complex, culturally nuanced texts into English. Second, it explores how the process of translation can serve as a means of acquainting students with prominent figures in Ukrainian political and cultural heritage—specifically Lesya Ukrainka and Mykhailo Drahomanov. The task positioned the students both as linguistic agents and as cultural mediators, responsible for conveying the intellectual contributions of key Ukrainian figures to international audiences.

In terms of methodology, the study adopts a qualitative case study approach, drawing on participant observation, editorial analysis, and pedagogical reflection during the collaborative translation process.

The primary research material is the English translation of Mykhailo Liakh's 2021 article, "Between Drahomanov and Marx: The Political Life of Lesya Ukrainka," produced by a group of twelve undergraduate and graduate students as part of a supervised internship for the Ukrainian journal *Commons*.

The students worked collaboratively in a shared Google Document, each translating one section of the article and proofreading another, with my supervision and coordination with the *Commons* editors. This setup fostered both peer learning and a sense of professional community. Despite certain challenges—such as participant changes and variability in translation quality due to differing levels of English proficiency—the final product represented a successful collaborative effort: the English translation was published on the *Commons* website on May 7, 2025.

This study is highly relevant in the context of ongoing efforts to globalize Ukrainian intellectual heritage. Against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale invasion and the growing international interest in Ukraine's political history, the collaborative translation of Mykhailo Liakh's article about Lesya Ukrainka's political thought offers both pedagogical value and a cultural intervention. It addresses the need for accessible, accurate translations of Ukrainian intellectual texts to broader audiences, while also

equipping students with essential linguistic and ideological competencies.

The object of the study is the collaborative student translation project of Mykhailo Liakh's article "Between Drahomanov and Marx: The Political Life of Lesya Ukrainka." The subject of the study is the pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural dynamics of the collaborative translation process, including the educational outcomes, editorial challenges, and the translation's function as cultural diplomacy.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, a growing number of English-language translations and scholarly works have sought to make Lesya Ukrainka's legacy more widely known. Bohdana Romantsova's article "Whoever liberates themselves, shall be free": Lesya Ukrainka's life and legacy," published in both Ukrainian and English on the Chytomo website in 2023 [5; 9], offers a concise overview of Ukrainka's life and work and concludes with a list of translations and suggestions for further projects. It also references Tamara Hundorova's book *Леся Українка. Книги Сивіллі* (*Lesya Ukrainka: The Sibylline Books*) [2], from which the chapter "A Female Romance: Lesya Ukrainka and Ol'ha Kobylians'ka" was translated by Uilleam Blacker for *Krytyka* in 2023 [7]. In 2022, Sasha Dovzhyk contributed to the popularization of Ukrainka's work in the Anglophone world through a series of publications summarized on the Ukrainian Institute London's website [6]. Among recent translations, Nina Murray's English rendition of *Cassandra: A Dramatic Poem* (2024) [10] has provided Anglophone readers with renewed access to Ukrainka's literary genius. Collectively, these efforts underscore the timeliness and relevance of student-led translation projects such as the one discussed in this study.

## 3. THE TRANSLATION PROJECT: GOALS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Liakh's original 2021 article attracted attention in leftist circles within Ukraine; its English translation aimed to extend this impact by reaching international audiences through social media. The student translators thus contributed to making Ukraine's rich intellectual traditions more visible and relevant in global conversations about socialism and national identity. In this way, the translation project became an act of cultural diplomacy, positioning the students not merely as translators, but as ambassadors of Ukrainian culture.

Pedagogically, the project deepened students' understanding of Lesya Ukrainka's thought and of the foundational role played by Mykhailo Drahomanov in shaping modern Ukrainian political and cultural discourse. By confronting the historical challenges of translating complex ideas for new audiences, the students developed critical historical awareness of the intersection between politics and culture—an essential

skill for any translator working at the nexus of language, ideology, and history.

The study also situates the project within the broader context of the author's ongoing work on translation as intercultural dialogue and social activism. The collaborative practices developed during this internship resonate with previous projects, emphasizing the role of translation in community-building and professional development. Furthermore, the linguistic challenges encountered here contribute to the broader study of translating journalistic and popular scholarly texts, especially the balancing act between fidelity and accessibility.

Ultimately, collaborative student translation projects offer effective educational tools for teaching translation and cultural history while serving as meaningful interventions in the globalization of Ukrainian intellectual heritage. By engaging with politically and culturally significant texts, students refine their professional skills and participate in the vital task of bringing Ukrainian voices—such as those of Lesya Ukrainska and Mykhailo Drahomanov—to international audiences.

#### 4. STUDENT TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the task of presenting Ukrainian intellectual heritage to the world has acquired heightened urgency. Translation of non-fiction and politically engaged texts now functions as a cultural statement. In this context, collaborative student translation projects exemplify a form of "bottom-up" cultural diplomacy, linking pedagogy with international outreach.

This case study of the collective student translation of Mykhailo Liakh's essay on Lesya Ukrainska's politics illustrates how translation can become both an educational laboratory and a site of encounter with questions of national identity and memory. Within the internship framework for the *Commons* journal and the *Written Translation in Action* study group, translation was organized as a collective process involving research, negotiation, critique, and revision, thereby transforming the classroom into a professional workshop.

#### 5. WORKFLOW: FROM INTERNSHIP TO PUBLISHED TRANSLATION

Students collaborated in a shared Google Document, each translating one excerpt of Liakh's essay and proofreading another. Drafts went through at least two cycles of peer revision before receiving my editorial review and final coordination with the *Commons* editors. In this way, the platform functioned simultaneously as a classroom and a professional workshop, enabling asynchronous communication, collective problem-solving, and the development of both technical and critical translation skills.

#### 6. EDITORIAL ANALYSIS: CHALLENGES AND PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

The student drafts showed considerable potential but also exhibited common issues typical of non-professional translation. Guided by close post-editing analysis of their work, three main areas of teaching opportunities emerged.

##### 6.1. Lexical and Terminological Clarity

One of the most instructive challenges arose in dealing with terms specific to nineteenth-century Ukrainian political and cultural history. Students often rendered such words in generic ways, which risked erasing their historical specificity. For example, *культурники* was translated simply as "cultural figures," a vague phrase that ignored the activist dimension of these intellectuals who promoted Ukrainian culture without advocating political sovereignty. My editorial intervention reframed this as "cultural activists, known as *kulturnyky*," combining explanation with transliteration to preserve nuance.

A similar issue appeared with *Громада*. Although literally meaning "community," it refers to a prominent political-intellectual movement. Machine translation or inattentive proofreading might misleadingly render it as "community," but the historically accurate choice was to transliterate it as *Hromada* and clarify the reference in context.

The term *Провансальство* posed yet another difficulty. Coined by Dmytro Dontsov as a polemical label for Drahomanov's political views, it was initially rendered as "provincialism," which stripped it of its derogatory and ideological force. The more precise solution was to retain the form "Provencalism," supplemented by contextual notes and reference to scholarly sources (e.g., the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* [1]) to guide readers unfamiliar with the term.

These cases demonstrate that lexical accuracy in translation extends beyond word choice: it requires cultural and historical contextualization. Pedagogically, they underline the importance of teaching students to use transliteration when necessary, to accompany it with explanatory notes, and to consult authoritative sources in order to preserve the integrity of Ukrainian intellectual vocabulary for international readers.

##### 6.2. Improving Style and Use of AI

Beyond terminology, student drafts often suffered from awkward syntax, uneven style, and inconsistent register. To address these issues, I emphasized the need to harmonize tone across sections, reduce literal phrasing, and adopt a more natural English flow. AI tools such as DeepL or ChatGPT were permitted at the drafting stage, but students were trained to approach them critically—using them as aids rather than substitutes for human translation. This practice demonstrated both the benefits of AI in supporting weaker students and the necessity of rigorous post-editing to ensure conceptual accuracy and stylistic coherence. Teachers can therefore recommend

combining peer review, instructor oversight, and guided AI use as part of the translation learning process.

### 6.3. Preserving Political Nuance

Beyond individual terms, students also struggled to render the complex political ideas surrounding Lesya Ukrainska's intellectual legacy and the influence of Mykhailo Drahomanov on her thought. Without careful attention, key concepts like "cosmopolitanism," "universalism," or "social democracy" risked being diluted into vague formulations, leaving the English text less precise than the Ukrainian original. Editorial work therefore focused on reinforcing the accurate use of ideological vocabulary and clarifying distinctions between overlapping concepts.

This experience demonstrated that teaching translation of politically engaged texts requires more than linguistic training: it demands historical and ideological literacy. Students must learn to navigate unfamiliar conceptual terrain while making translated texts accessible to international readers who may lack prior knowledge of Ukrainian intellectual history. Pedagogically, this highlights the need to integrate political and cultural background study directly into translation practice, ensuring that students not only translate words but also transmit nuanced intellectual traditions.

## 7. TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The cultural significance of this project lies in its subject: Lesya Ukrainska's political life and her intellectual relationship with Mykhailo Drahomanov. Liakh's essay repositions Ukrainska not only as a national poet but also as a political thinker engaged with transnational debates on socialism, cosmopolitanism, and revolutionary morality. Translating such concepts demanded more than linguistic skill—it required historical knowledge and ideological sensitivity. Students deepened their understanding of nineteenth-century radical movements and learned how political ideas evolve and travel across languages.

By publishing the translation in *Commons*, these efforts extended beyond the classroom into international debates on Eastern European socialism, feminist thought, and anti-imperialism. The students' careful rendering of terms and ideas thus became an act of cultural diplomacy: their work preserved the complexity of Ukrainian intellectual history while making it accessible to global readers. Translation in this context operated on several levels—educational, by developing critical awareness and professional competence; intellectual, by safeguarding the nuance of historical thought; and cultural, by contributing to the global circulation of Ukrainian voices.

## 8. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: A SUSTAINABLE MODEL

The *Written Translation in Action* study group, founded in 2018, integrates coursework, supervised

internships, and publication. To date, it has produced over 400 published student translations with partners such as *Krytyka*, *The Clackers*, and *Demokratischer Salon* (see, for example, the list of the group's publications in May, 2025 on the website of the Mykhailo Drahomanov State University of Ukraine [3]). This institutional model demonstrates how translation pedagogy can be tied to real-world cultural impact.

The project discussed here differed from the group's more typical assignments because of the density of the source text and the ideological complexity of its content. Yet its success shows that—with adequate editorial guidance—both undergraduate and graduate students can produce publishable translations that serve as meaningful contributions to cultural diplomacy.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Collaborative student translation, when framed as cultural diplomacy, extends far beyond classroom exercises. It connects students with living debates, global readers, and intellectual traditions, while equipping them with practical translation and editorial skills. The case of translating Mykhailo Liakh's essay demonstrates that translation can simultaneously serve as pedagogy, cultural intervention, and professional training.

From this project, several methodological insights for translation pedagogy can be drawn. Embedding student translations into authentic publication contexts proved to enhance motivation and foster a strong sense of professional responsibility. The use of peer-review cycles, in which each participant translated one section and proofread another, cultivated both critical awareness and collaborative competence. Equally important was the teaching of contextualization strategies: transliteration combined with explanation allowed students to preserve the historical and cultural specificity of terms while ensuring accessibility for international readers. The guided use of AI tools also played a role, providing weaker students with drafting support while emphasizing the necessity of critical post-editing to secure accuracy and stylistic coherence. Finally, presenting translation as a form of cultural diplomacy helped students understand themselves not only as language learners, but also as cultural mediators responsible for representing Ukrainian intellectual heritage to a global audience.

Future research may explore how this model can be adapted in other institutional contexts, how translation pedagogy contributes to decolonizing knowledge production, and how digital tools—including AI—can be ethically and effectively integrated into translator training.

Ultimately, student translation projects of politically and culturally significant texts do not merely develop linguistic skills; they empower students as active co-creators of knowledge and as participants in the global circulation of Ukrainian intellectual heritage.

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**Шопін Павло Юрійович** – доктор філософії з германістики, доцент кафедри прикладної лінгвістики, порівняльного мовознавства та перекладу Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова; e-mail: p.yu.shopin@udu.edu.ua; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8022-5327>; GOOGLE SCHOLAR: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=4Oq-acwAAAAJ>; RESEARCH GATE: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pavlo-Shopin-2>

## КОЛЕКТИВНИЙ СТУДЕНТСЬКИЙ ПЕРЕКЛАД ЯК КУЛЬТУРНО-ОСВІТНЯ ПРАКТИКА

У статті колективний студентський переклад розглядається як культурно-освітня практика. Об'єктом дослідження є освітній та культурно-дипломатичний проект, що зосереджений на колективному перекладі англійською мовою есея Михайла Ляха «Між Драгомановим і Марксом. Політичне життя Лесі Українки», який виконали дванадцять студентів Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова. Предмет дослідження – педагогічна, лінгвістична та культурна динаміка спільногого перекладу як методу навчання та культурної взаємодії. Мета статті – визначити роль колективного перекладу для розвитку професійних компетентностей студентів-перекладачів та їхньої критичної історичної свідомості, а також дослідити, як такі перекладацькі проекти сприяють міжнародному визнанню українських політичних та інтелектуальних традицій. Це дослідження є актуальним у контексті постійних зусиль з глобалізації української інтелектуальної спадщини, особливо після повномасштабного вторгнення Росії. З огляду на цей контекст, учасники проекту підійшли до перекладу не лише як до лінгвістичного завдання, а як до форми культурної дипломатії та громадянської активності. З точки зору методології, дослідження поєднує аналіз конкретних випадків, спостереження за учасниками та редакційну критику студентських чернеток у ширшому контексті педагогіки перекладу та публічної науки. Матеріал дослідження включає оригінальну українську статтю Михайла Ляха, її англійський переклад та ітеративні редактування з боку студентів і викладача, що привели до остаточної опублікованої версії. Проект доводить, що колективний студентський переклад може функціонувати як педагогічна модель і засіб культурної дипломатії, надаючи студентам можливість виступати посередниками національної історії для міжнародної аудиторії. До перспектив для подальших досліджень належить вивчення таких питань, як культурний потенціал перекладу на прикладі інших публіцистичних текстів, що їх перекладають студенти під керівництвом автора; роль перекладу в деколонізації знань; етична інтеграція інструментів штучного інтелекту в перекладацьку освіту; переклад як громадянська активність в умовах російсько-української війни.

**Ключові слова:** колективний переклад, Леся Українка, Михайло Драгоманов, педагогіка перекладу, переклад наукових текстів, переклад як культурна дипломатія, студентський переклад.

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